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**“MY OWN CHILD.”**



# "MY OWN CHILD."

A Novel.

BY  
FLORENCE MARRYAT,

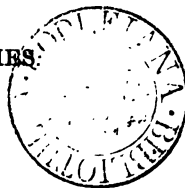
AUTHOR OF  
"LOVE'S CONFLICT," "FIGHTING THE AIR," "VÉRONIQUE,"  
ETC. ETC. ETC.

"There is, in all this cold and hollow world, no fount  
Of deep, strong, deathless Love, save that within  
A Mother's heart."

*Hemans.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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LITTLE QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

TO  
MY OWN CHILD,  
ETHEL MAUDE ALPE,  
AND TO HER HUSBAND,  
EDMUND NICHOLAS ALPE,  
I OFFER THIS FAINT REFLECTION  
OF A  
FEELING IMPRESSED ON MY HEART IN COLOURS  
WHICH NEITHER  
TIME NOR CIRCUMSTANCE WILL HAVE  
THE POWER TO FADE.

---

"What is it? Ask the King of Kings,  
Who hath decreed above,  
That Change shall mark all earthly things  
Except—a Mother's Love."



## CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. IN THE MERRY MONTH OF MAY . . . . .	1
II. BUT YOUTH COMES NEVER BACK AGAIN . . . . .	18
III. MY FIRST LOVE-LETTER . . . . .	34
IV. HUGH TO THE RESCUE . . . . .	60
V. I AM REALLY MARRIED . . . . .	75
VI. MR. AND MRS. HUGH POWER . . . . .	105
VII. CLOUDING OVER . . . . .	125
VIII. DARKNESS . . . . .	160
IX. A STARTLING DISCOVERY . . . . .	172
X. MY OWN CHILD . . . . .	195
XI. GOOD-BYE TO GUILDFORD . . . . .	230
XII. MY CHILD'S GRANDMOTHER . . . . .	241
XIII. MY CHILD'S NURSE . . . . .	269



# MY OWN CHILD.

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## CHAPTER I.

"IN THE MERRY MONTH OF MAY."

It was a sultry afternoon in the latter part of May, and I was sitting, or rather lounging, all by myself, in the drawing-room of Aunt Tessie's cottage at Guildford.

How well I can remember the appearance and the atmosphere of that stuffy little drawing-room! I have but to shut my eyes to see again the old-fashioned chairs set primly against the wall; the spindle-shanked, rickety tables, tottering beneath the weight of carved Indian boxes, and frail morsels of china, that threatened to

come down with every touch; and the faded water-colour drawings that plastered the paper with unseemly patches, and looked as though they had been wept over till all their tints had been washed out.

I hated that drawing-room, which contained such a mass of rubbish in the shape of wool-work, shell-work, and bead-work, scattered amongst a few articles of real value, that I could neither move quickly in it, nor laugh aloud without coming in violent contact with Aunt Tessie's notions of propriety, and fears for the safety of her possessions.

Aunt Tessie's notions of propriety were very strict indeed. I had been brought up by her, sorely against her own will, since I was four years old, and I have often speculated on her first feelings of dismay when she heard that her brother and his wife had both died in India, and bequeathed their only daughter (with the very slender patri-

mony afforded by the Military fund) to her care and protection.

Her protection—that is to say, the protection of her house and name—Aunt Tessie certainly bestowed upon me, but I experienced very little of her care. She suffered me to grow up beside her, and that was all. I had come without warning, a very unwelcome guest, to break in upon the orderly routine of her maiden life—and Aunt Tessie would not allow my presence to interfere with her more than was absolutely necessary. I was fed, clothed, and educated like a gentlewoman; but I was never permitted to forget that I stood alone in the world. No kind of restraint was laid upon me, excepting so far as extreme propriety in the house was concerned. I chose my own companions, and visited those whom I liked best, always supposing they were in my own class of life—indeed, I think Aunt Tessie was glad of any reasonable excuse to



get me out of the cottage, where the free remarks and unrestrained manners, which she had never taken the trouble to curb, too often offended the ears of her old-maid companions. Yet she was not unkind to me: many people thought she was far too indulgent, and that I was a regularly-spoilt child. But I had never known what it was to be folded to a warm-hearted bosom, or to feel the tears or caresses of affection on my cheek. All my earliest recollections were of the little cottage at Guildford, and my own childish wonder why I might not call the lady who was so kind and yet so stiff with me, "mamma," as other children called their guardians. Once I proposed doing so, or perhaps even tried how it would sound, to the ineffable horror of my aunt, whose unpolluted blood curdled and virgin cheek flushed at the bare idea.

"Whatever can have put such an extraordinary notion into the child's head," I

heard her confide to a sympathising female friend; "and after the care with which I have tried to train her! It was most inconsiderate of my poor brother to lay such a charge upon me. It may be the ruin of my character before I have done with it!"

No! Aunt Tessie, although an excellent woman after her kind, was unemotional; there is no doubt of that; and after these many years of separation, I wonder how it happened that I was not more unhappy whilst in her charge. For I was of a warm-hearted, ardent temperament, and at the time my story opens had just completed my fifteenth year. In some things I was much more forward than a girl of my age should have been; in others I was as backward as a child. I had a profound and varied knowledge of the world as it is to be learned from works of fiction; but of the real life that went on around me I had been kept in utter ignorance. The starched old gover-

ness who came daily to instruct me (and whose ideas of female decorum were after Aunt Tessie's own heart) I never dreamt of in any light than as of some one who was to be got rid of as soon as possible; and it was not likely that I should have taken much interest in the acquaintanceship of the doctor, the clergyman and his wife, and two or three old maiden friends of my aunt's, who were all the company admitted within the walls of Ivy Cottage. I knew plenty of boys and girls of my own age belonging to the residents of Guildford; but Aunt Tessie would as soon have thought of asking the inhabitants of the Zoological Gardens to tea, as of admitting my unruly playmates within the sacred precincts of her dining and drawing room. So I seemed to have grown up with two faces, like a little female Janus. One was the proper prim face which I kept for home and the sake of peace, and which, when not engaged in preparing lessons for

Miss Drayton, was generally occupied in devouring such old-world romances as Aunt Tessie's small library afforded me: the other, a wild madcap countenance, which looked all eager for a good romp at blind-man's buff, or a race over the adjacent meadows—anything, indeed, which should deliver its ears from the infliction of hearing a discussion on the best cure for tic-doloureux or the probability of the exact date of the millennium.

In fact, my young blood was beginning to effervesce from the lack of excitement in its daily routine, and threatened sometimes to run right over for want of a safety-valve. I was growing old enough to feel and chafe at my dull existence, and to long for any change—never mind what, so long as it was a change.

I was feeling this want more than ever on the afternoon of which I speak; and yet, when Aunt Tessie came into the draw-

ing-room, attired in the most antique of shawls pinned tightly across her narrow shoulders, and the most old-fashioned of drawn-silk bonnets closely confining her long thin curls, to ask if I would accompany her to visit some of her friends, I recoiled with horror from the idea—I knew too well what those lengthy visits on a hot afternoon entailed.

“What! on such a broiling day as this, Aunt Tessie? You’ll be roasted alive. The thermometer must be at six hundred and ninety, if it is at one.”

“I wish you would not speak in such exaggerated terms, Katherine. Take your feet off that stool, my dear; you cannot have changed your shoes since you came in from the garden! and you know how often I have requested you—”

“Bother the stool!” I cried as I irreverently kicked it from me: “it’s only a little dust, Aunt Tessie; it wouldn’t hurt a

“The principle is the same, Katherine, whatever the actual damage done may prove. Now, see how you are lolling back in that arm-chair, and without an antimacassar behind your head, too! I cannot think what Miss Drayton can be about, to let such an infringement of good manners pass unnoticed. There is nothing, to my mind, that more marks the lady than due attention to these little duties. ‘*Les bienséances de la société*—’ ”

But at this juncture I yawned, and dragged myself up into a sitting posture. “*Les bienséances de la société*,” were such old friends—or rather enemies, of mine.

“Where are you going, Aunt Tessie? You’ll catch a fever from this sun. It’s hotter than August, a great deal.”

“Again, Katherine! How often am I to remind you of the same error? I do not suppose that the names of the ladies I intend visiting will possess much interest for you,

particularly as you decline to accompany me. So I shall leave you to prepare your tasks for Miss Drayton ; and you can take a turn in the garden when it grows cooler."

And so Aunt Tessie—as delighted, I felt assured, to avoid the pleasure of my company as I was to see the last of her—quietly closed the door behind her, and left me to my own devices.

The book I was reading, and which my aunt had evidently mistaken for a French or German grammar, was Miss Burney's 'Evelina.' Nowadays I should hardly have the patience to wade through such a mass of sentimental twaddle ; but at fifteen the appetite for romance and adventure has not been sated, and I was devouring every word of the novel with eager interest. I longed to have accompanied, 'Evelina,' to the Ranelagh Gardens, and to have received the gallant attentions of all the fops and beaux of the day—or rather night. I

should even have liked to have been entrapped down a dark alley, and had a handkerchief stuffed into my mouth, and to have been carried off by the wicked lordling, unable to cry for help, and delivered out of his toils at the last moment by my intrepid lover.

“Why don’t such things happen nowadays?” I mused discontentedly. “Everything is so commonplace and stupid—there is no romance left anywhere. I wish I could go on the stage, or be an operatic singer—or a crossing sweeper—or anything but what I am. Why, it would be twice as much fun to stand with a broom at the corner of a street and watch all the people that went by, and hold out my hands for halfpennies, as living in this pokey little hole with Aunt Tessie. I wish I could fall awfully sick—I do—and have to be sent away to the seaside, and make my escape on board some ship in sailor’s clothes, and be



put to climb the rigging, and all that. Oh! how I do *hate* this life, and Miss Drayton, and Aunt Tessie, and all the lot of them—”

But here my reverie was interrupted by the sound of a strong young voice shouting over the garden-wall :

“ Kate ! Kate ! I say Katie ! ”

“ That’s Hugh Power,” I thought to myself lazily, and then the voice commenced again :

“ Kate ! where are you ? I want you. Here, Kate ! ”

I shook the hair out of my eyes, and rising, with my book in my hand, walked slowly to the open French window. The back garden, which consisted of a long, narrow strip of ground, well grown over with shrubs and flowers, was enclosed by a low wall, sitting astride which I perceived the loose, muscular figure of a young Irishman, who was supposed to be finishing his studies with Mr. Dean, the rector.

"What do you mean by making such a horrid noise?" I exclaimed, with childish familiarity. "Aren't you afraid Aunt Tessie will hear you?"

"Not a bit of it; for the old cat has just walked into the rectory garden, and I took the opportunity to slip over here. Come out into the fields with me, Katie."

"I can't—it's so hot."

"It isn't hot—there's a lovely breeze just sprung up. Besides, I know a place where it's all trees. (How jolly you do look, with your hair hanging over your face!)"

"It's horrid!" I cried, using my favourite expression, and trying to push my hair away from my heated cheeks. "You can't think how it makes my head ache; and Aunt Tessie won't let me put it up into a chignon. She says I'm too young—just like her, the horrid thing! Whatever I ask for, she always says I'm *too young*."

"It's not a fault she can accuse herself of," said Hugh, laughing. "Come, Katie, don't be lazy. Do come for a walk. And you are looking *so* pretty this afternoon."

There was not much point in the last remark, but I felt my face grow hotter as he made it, and my eyes sought the ground. It was the first time I can remember experiencing any feeling to tell me I was no longer a child. It pleased and frightened me both at the same moment, and I forgot to answer Hugh's request.

"Well, won't you come?" he repeated.

"Yes, I will," I said suddenly, "if you will wait till I get my hat."

I threw 'Evelina' on an adjacent chair, and ran upstairs to the attic which was called my bedroom. It was the most untidy, comfortless little place possible—untidy, because by nature I was careless and impatient, and no one had ever taken the trouble to point out to me how much my

nature interfered with my well-doing—comfortless, because, besides a gingerbread-covered Bible, which I never opened, and a bulging Church-service, which represented to me the dullest hours of my dull existence, when I accompanied Aunt Tessie to the parish church, there was not a single sign about it to tell of that sweet hope and communion that, never leaving us, appears more close, perhaps, when we seek our beds at night than at any other period spent outside the sanctuary. But at that time of my life, what did I know of a higher one, or the pleasure it is capable of affording? To all intents and purposes I was a little heathen, who gabbled over a senseless formula to her unknown God morning and evening, and had but one idea whilst engaged upon His worship—how to make the time pass most rapidly.

I brushed back my untidy hair, crowned it with a broken-rimmed hat, and flew back

to my companion, who meanwhile had lighted a cigar, and was defiling the currant-bushes that lined the wall with its unholy incense.

"Oh! don't smoke," I cried, although I vastly admired him for being able to smoke. "Suppose Aunt Tessie were to smell it, and find out you had been here, what *would* she say?"

"Smell it, you little goose!—what! out in the open air? It would take a longer nose even than Aunt Tessie's to do that. But come, Katie, you must climb over the wall. I daren't go through the house and out at the front door, for fear I should meet her face to face; and then, I suppose, you would never be allowed to come to tea at the rectory again."

"No, never, Hugh!" I replied, with a mournful shake of the head.

"And what should I do *then*?" he went on inquiringly.

I did not answer; and, jumping down into the garden, he raised me in his arms, and placed me on the top of the wall.

“There you are,” he said; “and now you must scramble down the other side by yourself. Out of the way, Kate! Here I come!” And with one bound the long legs came vaulting over the brick-work.

“What a great strong fellow you are, Hugh!” I said, admiringly, as we walked away together.

## CHAPTER II.

“BUT YOUTH COMES NEVER BACK AGAIN.”

HE *was* a splendid young fellow, of that type which possesses too much animal power in youth, perhaps, to make an intellectual old age, but which yet can inspire us, whilst it is young, with the profoundest admiration. His muscular limbs, still rather loose and disjointed (he was but twenty-one), were enormous in their length and girth; his chest was like a tower of strength; his hands and feet powerful and large.

He had golden-brown hair, that curled crisply and closely to his head; a small moustache, and the first indications of a strong beard.

His grey-blue Irish eyes, characteristic of his nation, were alternately flashing with humour or anger, or softened by emotion; but his feelings were so transient, that none of his moods lasted long, and an April day is less variable than he was.

I had made his acquaintance at the house of our old rector, who kept guard over some half-dozen unruly lambs of the same pattern; but none of them had ever ventured to brave the dangers of Aunt Teresa's garden to pay me a visit, except Hugh Power.

He was the only son of one of the richest and oldest Catholic families in Ireland, and it was matter of wonder to some people that his father should have placed him with Mr. Dean, or that Mr. Dean should have accepted the charge. But when a clergyman marries on an income which is not enough for two, and multiplies himself by twelve in consequence, there is no



saying to what extent he may be called upon to sacrifice his inclinations to his necessities before he sees a way out of his difficulties. So, whether Mr. Dean would have chosen Hugh Power as a pupil, or not, I am unable to say; but I am quite sure that if Hugh Power had not chosen Mr. Dean as a tutor, he would never have been placed there. Self-will was one of the predominating characteristics of that young man's nature; and he was considered too precious a creature at home to be thwarted in anything. So, whatever may have been his primal reasons for selecting the rural home of the rector of Guildford as the scene of his final studies before going to college, there he was—and thence he had no present intention of removing himself.

As I looked up at Hugh, and spoke admiringly of his feat of strength, he took the compliment quite as a matter of course.

“Why, what would you have a man be?” he answered proudly. “Not a little tender creature like yourself, eh, Katie?”

“I wish Aunt Tessie could hear you call me ‘tender,’ Hugh. She says I am the greatest hoyden she ever saw, and much more like a boy than a girl,” I said, silyly, as I glanced up into his face.

“Well, I think you’re much more like a girl than a boy; so never mind what the old woman says. I’ll race you to the top of that hill for twopence, Katie.”

“Done!” I cried, setting off at the top of my speed.

But though my legs were tolerably long ones for my height, and I was as slender as a reed, and as light as a feather, muscle won the day; and when, panting and out of breath, I arrived at the top of the hill, it was to find Master Hugh waiting to receive me, without—to use his own expression—a hair turned.

"What a shame!" I said, laughing, as I stumbled against him. "I'll never race with you again. I believe you did it on purpose to make me look worse than I did before. Where *is* the brim of my hat?"

"About your throat, like a necklace of straw. You held it down at the weakest point, Katie, and it gave way all round. Don't take it off! you can't think how becoming it is."

"What a wretch I must look! If Aunt Tessie could only see me now, I should have a dose of 'Les bienséances' for the next week at least."

"You look beautiful, Katie! Your cheeks are like roses, and your eyes as bright as—"

"Oh! don't talk to me like that, Hugh! —I wish you wouldn't."

"Why not?"

"Because it isn't truth," I answered, shyly, longing all the while to hear him say it was.

"It is truth, Katie—at least, I think so."

"*Really?*—am I really pretty, Hugh?" I inquired, with my cheeks glowing and my eyes on the ground.

"I think you are the prettiest little girl I ever set eyes on; and what's more—"

"What's more?" I repeated, after a pause, finding he did not continue.

But Hugh had suddenly turned shy like myself; he grew red, and changed the subject.

"The sun is full in our faces here, Katie; let us cross the next field, and get into Farmer Ridley's long meadow; it's so beautifully shady there."

He took my hand as he spoke, and I turned and followed him, and we went like two children through the field together. Not quite like two children, either. I cannot tell of what Hugh was thinking; but as for myself, a new world seemed suddenly

to have opened before me—the world I had longed to enter—and I was wondering whether a new experience of which I had often dreamt, was about to make its first appearance at the same time.

We entered Farmer Ridley's meadow in silence, and took our way beneath the flowering hedges that enclosed it.

"What lovely May!" I exclaimed, as we came in sight of a hawthorn in full blossom, which looked like a gigantic wedding bouquet.

"I will get you some," said Hugh, as he tore off large bunches of the fragrant flowers, and placed them in my ruined hat and the bosom of my dress.

"I love the May, as I have cause to do," he added, somewhat more seriously.

"What cause?"

"Don't you know that it is our Lady's flower! The churches are all decorated with it this month. We call it the month of Mary."

"I wish you wouldn't talk such rubbish!" I cried, irreverently. I was so young, and so completely ignorant of the doctrines of any Church (the one in which I had been reared, included), that I was always disposed to laugh and feel ill at ease when the subject of religion was even alluded to. But Hugh Power, who was perfectly conversant with all matters that related to his own faith, was not only shocked, but hurt at my exclamation. I could see it in his face.

"What do you mean by 'rubbish'?" he said shortly.

"Oh! about the Virgin, and all that sort of thing. I am sure Aunt Tessie would be awfully angry if she thought you talked to me about it. And I don't believe it either, you know—of course I don't; how should I?"

"No! I don't suppose you do," he answered quietly, as he took the bunches of

hawthorn from my hat and frock again, and threw them over the hedge.

"Why do you take away my May?" I said plaintively. I was already sorry I had offended him.

"It is no longer any pleasure to me to see you wearing it, Katie."

"Well, if you *will* huff so easily, you must. Irishmen always have bad tempers."

We strolled on in miserable silence together for a few minutes, and then I could stand it no longer.

"Hugh!"

"Well, Katie!"

"I'm so sorry I said that!" I murmured, slipping my gloveless hand into his. "I didn't mean it, you know—at least, I suppose I didn't. Don't be angry with me, Hugh."

"I am not angry—only it hurt me."

"Well, I won't hurt you any more. I will believe anything you wish me to."

"But you say all Irishmen have bad tempers."

"I didn't mean that, either ; I meant—you—you are very unkind, to make me so—unhappy, Hugh !" I commenced whimpering. His handsome young face cleared up in a minute.

"My darling Katie," he said, kissing me, "don't cry. I love you so, dear. I do indeed. And you may say anything in the world to me, Katie, except ridicule my faith."

"I didn't mean it," I sobbed, but in a tone that showed signs of being comforted.

"If you knew what I feel about the name we mentioned, you would never speak of it as rubbish to me. Why, Katie, I often say and think, that if ever I have a daughter, I *couldn't* call her by any name but Mary, it is so sacred and so sweet to me."

"You look very like a papa," I exclaimed, laughing at the boy's earnest-



ness. "You silly old fellow! You'll be talking about your grandchildren next."

"Well, if I live, I suppose I shall be married, some day. Would you like to be married, Katie?"

"I am not sure. Sometimes I think I would (if he were very nice indeed); but then at other times I think I would rather go round the world and seek adventures."

"How can a girl seek adventures, unless she has a husband to seek them with her? And what do you call 'very nice indeed,' Katie?"

"Oh! I don't know," I said, blushing. "Rich, and young, and handsome—and all that, I suppose."

"What a terrible list of virtues for one man to possess! To be young and rich is easy enough, I suppose—at least, lots of people are young and rich—but to be handsome, and '*all that*,' into the bargain, is a regular poser. How much

does '*all that*' contain, Katie? Would there be any prospect of arriving at the end of its requirements?"

"You are laughing at me now, Hugh, but you know what I mean. I wouldn't marry a boy like Fisher, for instance, for anything."

"No, because Fisher is plain, and stammers, and is more than half afraid of you into the bargain. But if a fellow loved you *very much*, Katie—"

"Yes."

"And had plenty of money to support you and get you nice things—houses, you know—and horses—and—"

"And boxes at the theatre, and a carriage, and lots of caramels."

"And to be able to take you to Paris and Italy, and all the other places you have so often longed to see—"

"Oh! that *would* be charming!" I interrupted, clapping my hands. "Fancy

being away from Aunt Teresa, and able to do anything I liked !”

“Would you marry a fellow like that, Katie ?” continued Hugh wistfully.

I stopped short in my rhapsodies and considered. “Not if he were Fisher,” I said stoutly.

Hugh laughed.

“Not for all that money ?”

“Of course not”—indignantly. “What, that freckled little wretch ?”

“Well, Gordon, then ? He’s good-looking enough.”

“I don’t like Gordon,” I answered quickly.

“Who *do* you like, Katie ?”

“No one,” I began, but halted and grew red.

“Not *me*, dear ?”

“Oh, Hugh !” and the tone in which I uttered his name, I suppose, encouraged him to go on.

"Katie," he said hurriedly, "you laughed at me just now for talking about getting married; but I'm quite old enough to be married, you know. I came into my property last month. I am my own master, and there is no one who has the right to say 'No' to me. I want to be married, darling. I want to be married to you."

"Now, Hugh—at once?" I exclaimed, looking hurriedly round me, as if I expected a parson to appear immediately upon the scene.

"Not before we get home," he answered, laughing. "But, look here, darling. Will you?"

"Of course I would. Only Aunt Tessie will never let me, Hugh."

"But if Aunt Tessie said 'Yes'? Will you come with me to Paris, and see all the theatres?"

"Oh, Hugh! How jolly?"

"You consent, then, Katie?" And as

Hugh spoke he put his arm round my waist and drew me closely to him ; and I felt that the new world had opened, and that it was all very delightful, and pleasant, and enchanting.

"I shall wear a wedding-ring," I said with sudden glee.

"Yes, and a diamond one above it. Nothing will be too good for my dear little wife."

"And I shall be called 'Mrs,' shan't I, Hugh? I shall be Mrs. Hugh Power?"

"Of course you will; and Lady Power some day, when my poor old dad dies."

"Oh! Hugh, I *should* like it very, very much," I whispered, overcome with the prospect of my approaching grandeur. "Only what *will* Aunt Tessie say?"

"She will have no right to say anything but 'Yes.' It is *your* business to decide, Katie. And you say you will be Mrs. Hugh, don't you?"

"Yes," I answered, in a very subdued voice. I was but a child in my brimless hat and common schoolroom frock—a child in mind and manners, and experience, no less than in dress; and yet, as I walked up and down the meadow with Hugh's arm round my waist, and listened to his boyish talk about the future, and all we were to do and say and see in it, something more than a child's heart beat in my bosom, and the blossom of an innocent love unfolded its leaves beneath his influence.

There is nothing more beautiful than the first, fresh affection of a boy and girl who do not know what passion is, but love without envy or jealousy, or fear of loss, and simply because they cannot help loving, and nature calls them to it.

If it would but last ! if it *would* but last ! How often in later years have I looked back on that young love of mine, and envied its purity and singleness of heart,

and wished that I had never wakened from the blissful dream in which it wrapped me!

The bright afternoon sun had long set behind the hills, and the evening had become dusk and chilly, before we remembered where we were.

"By Jove! half-past seven!" exclaimed Hugh as he looked at his watch, "and I shall be late for old Dean's supper. We'd better go home, Katie, or we shall get into a scrape."

"And then Aunt Tessie will say, perhaps, that I mustn't come out in the evening again. Let us run, Hugh. It's all downhill."

"Never mind, darling, if she does scold a little. It won't be for long now, Katie, any way."

"What shall I say if she asks me anything?"

"Tell the truth. I shall see her tomorrow morning without fail. And I don't

think she'll find many objections to make to *me*," added Hugh superbly. "Good-night, my sweet little pet. Give me one more kiss before we come in sight of the garden. Now for a hoist over the wall. That's it, Mrs. Power. "Good-night. God bless you." And Hugh stood kissing his hand to me in the fast-falling dusk, as I walked soberly up the garden path and tried to realise the tremendous fact that I was *an engaged woman*.



## CHAPTER III.

### MY FIRST LOVE-LETTER.

THERE was no light in the dingy little drawing-room, and I dared to hope that Aunt Tessie had not yet come home. But I was mistaken. As I stumbled over the fluffy mat, that lay at the open window, her thin voice rang sharply on my ear, and I knew she was not in the best of tempers.

“What are you knocking over now, Katherine? You’ll have that table down in another minute. Where have you been? Why are you so late? It’s nearly eight o’clock.”

“You said I might go for a walk,” I answered, somewhat sulkily. The change

of atmosphere was too sudden for my moral constitution.

"I said you might go for a walk, but I did not say you might stay out till after dark. It's not fit that young ladies should go rambling about the fields by themselves at such an hour. It is most indecorous. You are old enough to know better."

The injustice of the charge made me imprudent.

"I have not been alone," I answered rashly.

"Not alone! With whom have you been?"

"Hugh Power."

"Hugh Power!—that lad who is studying with the rector? And pray who gave Master Power permission to walk about with a niece of mine? I shall speak to Mr. Dean about it. I consider it is a great liberty on his part."

"It was not a liberty," I returned hotly;

"and Hugh is not *Master* Power. He was twenty-one last month, and has come into his property."

"*Hugh*, indeed!" cried Aunt Tessie, with uplifted hands. "What next I wonder! I tell you, Katherine, that in my day such a thing would never have been permitted as for a young lady to ramble promiscuously with an idle lad. But I shall soon see a stop put to it. You have had your last walk with Master Hugh Power, or any other Master, for a long time to come."

"I am not so sure of that, Aunt Tessie," I said defiantly, for my naturally quick temper had risen at the contemptuous tone of her voice. "I have not been doing anything wrong. *You* go to tea with the rector, whenever you feel inclined, and walk with him too: I met you in the High Street together last Tuesday—you know I did."

"Well! and if so, do you suppose there is no difference between a lady of my age and a little girl like you?"

"I'm not a little girl!—I'm fifteen!—and—and—I *shall be married some day*," I added, *sotto voce*.

"*What!*" exclaimed Aunt Tessie, too much astonished at my audacity to say more.

"I shall be married some day," I repeated; "at least I suppose I shall—most girls are; and—and—I don't think you ought to treat me like a child, Aunt Tessie, any longer!"

"You'll be married some day! You—a chit who has not yet left off pinafores! What on earth will you talk of next? Pray is this one of the notions *Master Power* has been putting into your head?"

"Yes, it is! and it's very unkind of you to insist upon calling him 'Master' Power, Aunt Tessie, when I tell you plainly he is twenty-one."

“ Oh ! he is twenty-one, is he ?—and he believes that you will be married some day. Did *Mr.* Power add to the obligation by prophesying whom you would marry, *Miss* Arundel ? ”

The sarcastic tone in which she spoke goaded me on to say the very last thing that I should have said.

“ Yes, he did ! He wished me to marry him, and I promised I would ; and I shall be Lady Power some day, Aunt Tessie, though you *are* so unkind about it ; and then perhaps you’ll be sorry you spoke as you have done now—and Hugh will be awfully angry when he hears it, for he has always thought you dreadfully ill-natured to me ; and—and—I wish I was dead ! ” I continued, lapsing into tears, “ or—or married—or gone away from all this—for you make me wretched !—you do ! ”

My aunt was too much amazed to answer. We had often had altercations before, and

some rather stormy scenes of mutual recrimination ; but that I, on whom she looked (as indeed, who would not have done?) as a mere child, should suddenly commence to talk about being married, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for me to do, had completely taken away her breath. She sat silent, drumming on the table nearest to her with the fingers of one hand, whilst I continued to sob in the corner, and make my heated face look still more unseemly by the application of a not over-clean pocket-handkerchief.

Presently my aunt rose, still in dignified silence, and rang the bell.

“Light the lamp, Jane!” she said as the housemaid appeared to answer it.

The lamp was lit, and solemnly placed upon the table. I left my covert, and with a final scrub over my blurred countenance, attempted to slip upstairs. But aunt Tessie was not going to let me off like that.

"I will thank you to resume your seat, Katherine!" she said in the iciest of voices.

I sat down again, prepared for the worst.

"Troublesome as you have been to me from the first moment you entered this house," said Aunt Tessie, "I never thought you could have so far forgotten yourself as you have done to-night. I am ashamed of you!—perfectly ashamed of you! A child of your age to talk about being married, and leaving my protection, when you are not even old enough to know how to address your elders with the respect due to their age and station in society! If these are the ideas that association with other young people of your own age puts into your head, the fewer companions you have the better. I shall never permit you to leave the house alone in future. Miss Drayton will walk out with you; and should business take me from home, you will not quit the garden.

You have brought this restriction upon yourself by your evil conduct. And as for Hugh Power, I shall request Mr. Dean to order him never to speak to you again."

"But he can't order him to do anything. He is of age," I answered, in a subdued voice. I knew how young I was, and the fear of being peremptorily separated from my lover was appalling me. I was too inexperienced to consider that it would be to Aunt Tessie's interest to get rid of me as soon as possible.

"He *shall* order him ! And if the young man will not listen to his tutor's commands, I presume he will to mine. Marriage, indeed ! why, he must be mad to have talked of such a thing, and you to listen to him. He might just as well propose to marry your doll ! But we shall soon see if we cannot settle the whole business. And now go to bed at once. No ! don't kiss me ! I am exceedingly offended with you, and it



will be a long time before we can meet upon our usual terms."

"I wasn't going to kiss you!—I wouldn't if you ask me! But I am engaged to Hugh, and I always shall be!"

"Go upstairs at once, miss! You ought to be ashamed of yourself to speak in that immodest manner. What has come to the young girls of the present day is past my comprehension to imagine."

And I daresay the sudden blossoming of my womanhood had taken poor Aunt Tessie by a surprise only second to my own; and that my uncouth speeches, and apparent obstinacy, occupied her mind for many hours after I had fallen asleep. As for myself, I stalked up to my bedroom, burning with indignation, and shut the door behind me with a heavy slam. I had been so utterly spoiled, in the true sense of the word, by neglect and want of affection, that the consideration my feelings had never re-

ceived I was unable to bestow on those of others. I did not think for a moment of Aunt Tessie's natural surprise and displeasure at hearing me talk as though I had been a grown-up woman. I only resented the affront my new-blown dignity had received, and longed to revenge myself on the person who dared to talk of my tall young lover as if he were only a schoolboy, and to ridicule the idea which had made me feel so proud.

"She *shan't* keep Hugh from coming to see me!" I said to myself angrily, as I slammed the door. "She's a nasty, ill-natured old thing, who can't bear anybody to be married because she's never been married herself! But I should die if I never saw Hugh again, and only went out walking with that horrid Miss Drayton!—and I *must* see him, and I *will*!"

How my childish heart beat at that moment, and mimicked the passions of older

and more experienced—though perhaps not less childish—hearts ! How I longed to fly to the sheltering arms of my boy-lover, and hear him tell me over again that I should wear a wedding-ring, and be “ Lady Power ” some day, and Aunt Tessie had no right to say anything but “ Yes ! ” It had sounded all so plausible and so true, out in the open fields ; but my comfortless bedroom looked like a prison, and I felt like a prisoner as I sat down on a cane-bottomed chair, and laid my head on the deal dressing-table, and cried as if my heart would break. Jane, the housemaid, who was a good-natured girl, coming in to turn down my bedclothes, found me in that condition.

“ Lor ! Miss Katie ! what a start it gave me, coming on you in this way in the dark ! Why, you’re a-crying ! Whatever’s the matter ? Has the old toad been a worrying you again about them lessons ? ”

“ Oh ! no, Jane ! it isn’t the lessons ! I

shouldn't mind them half so much; but it's much worse than the lessons!" And then and there I poured into Jane's eager ear the whole account of the magnificent prospects which had been so rudely dashed to the ground. The girl, only eighteen herself, fully sympathized with me, as might be expected.

"Lor, now, Miss Katie! To think of your having a beau!—and such a fine-looking young feller into the bargain! And Miss Harundel thinks you're too young! What rubbish! I was only fourteen when I first kept company— and I've had five or six of 'em since then! But what should a dried-up old maid like that know about it? She's never had a hoffer 'erself—*that* I bet! O Lor! Miss Katie! it'll all come right—love-making always do! So don't you cry no more, but get to bed like a good girl, and we shall have Mr. Power round here the first thing in the morning."

“But she won’t let him come in, Jane,” I said mournfully. “She declares she’ll go round to the rectory and tell Mr. Dean all about it, and ask him to order Hugh not to see me again; and then, perhaps, he’ll go back to Ireland, and I shall never be married, or anything, and grow to be a horrid old maid, like Aunt Tessie, and—and—” But this prospect was too much for my equanimity, and I could proceed no further.

“*You* be an old maid!” cried Jane reassuringly. “Never! Miss Katie! You’re much more likely to have three ’usbands one after the other.”

“Oh! but I ~~never~~ could marry any one but Hugh, Jane. You can’t think how kind and goodnatured he is; and so strong! And he can ride, and fish, and shoot, and swim—in fact he can do everything!”

“In course he can; but I musn’t stay chattering to you any longer, or we shall have the old gal coming after us. But look

here, Miss Katie. You write your gentleman a bit of a letter, and I'll take it to him as soon as it's morning."

"A letter!" I exclaimed. The idea of writing to tell Hugh my trouble had never struck me before.

"Lor, yes, miss. Why, I writes to *my* young man as regular as ever Sunday comes round. You can scribble it with a pencil, you know—anythink will do, so you put it in an anvelope—and I'll slip in and get it as we're going up to bed, and Mr. Power shall get it afore he has his breakfast."

"Oh! I will!" I said joyously, all my despair vanishing before the prospect of the new pleasure. "Thank you, dear Jane, for thinking of it. It will be delightful, and Hugh will be so pleased. And you will be quite sure to run over with it as soon as ever you're up. And mind, whatever you do, that Mr. Dean doesn't get hold of it."

"Why, miss," replied Jane, her rosy face lighting up with mirth at the idea, "*as if I would!* Lor, you don't know half the dodges I have to be up to, to get a sight of *my* young man. I *should* be a fool if I couldn't manage to keep clear of the rector or his old missis. But there's the bell. I must go. So you keep up your spirits miss, and write your letter, and I'll fetch it as sure as the clock strikes ten."

"But I haven't had any tea," I said despondently. At fifteen, and after a long walk, the stomach plays rather a prominent part in one's organisation, and even love must succumb to its importunity. It is only in the prime of life that we permit our passions to lead us blindfold, and cannot eat, or sleep, or amuse ourselves, unless they are satisfied. I loved Hugh very dearly, but I *did want my tea*.

"Lor bless me! no more you have, poor dear! But you shall have it, as my

name's Jane. I believe she'd be glad to think you went to sleep on an empty stomach, though I know she's a-howling for her own tea now. Here, now, light your candle and stay quiet for a bit, and I'll be up again in half an hour."

She left the room as she spoke, and I turned my attention to writing my first love-letter. I had got an end of lead pencil in my pocket, but I could not find a morsel of paper. I was in despair again. I dared not ring or call, for fear of attracting my aunt's attention; nor dared I delay my task, in case she should take it into her head to follow me upstairs. Looking about to see if I could find anything with which to effect my object, my eye lit upon my gingerbread-covered Bible. In a moment I had whipped it off the mantel-shelf, and torn out its fly-leaves and title-page. I had never been taught to hold any special reverence for the book, and regarded it as I would any other



volume—except that the lessons I was set to learn from it were a trifle duller and more incomprehensible to me than my ordinary tasks.

I forget what the substance of that first love-letter of mine was, but I have no doubt I should smile to see it again now. I can vouch for its being written in a shockingly bad hand, and I daresay all the words were not correctly spelt. But I know I *felt* what I wrote, and fully believed that my gallant friend would obey the summons I sent him, and come and rescue me from the clutches of Aunt Tessie as soon as it was put into his hand. When Jane crept upstairs with the tea and bread-and-butter she had promised me, she asked if the epistle were ready, closing the door carefully before she put the question, and speaking in a whisper even then.

“For I don’t know what’s come to your aunt to-night, Miss Katie; and that’s the

fact. But she's awfully restless and sniffing about in all directions. I expects she thinks Master Hugh is hidden away under some of the sofa-cushions."

"My note is ready, Jane, but I haven't an envelope to put it in."

"That's just what I was thinking, and so I brought you one," replied Jane, as she produced a very small and common-looking envelope from her pocket. "Now make haste and put it up, Miss Katie, for I shouldn't be surprised if she popped in upon us at any moment."

"But it won't stick, Jane," I cried despairingly.

"Won't it now! That's just like them horrid cheats of stationers. Can't I put a seal on it for you in the kitchen?"

"Let me try a little longer," I exclaimed, as I pressed the edges of the envelope together. I did not relish the idea of the cook and housemaid reading all the nonsense that I had said to Hugh.

But the delay, slight as it was, proved fatal. In another moment Jane had snatched the letter from my hand, and, looking up to inquire the reason of her haste, my eyes encountered the figure of Aunt Tessie.

"Why are you not in bed?" she said to me sternly. "And who ordered you, Jane, to bring up that tray to Miss Katherine?"

"Well, I thought, ma'am, as she had had no tea—"

"You had no business to think. What is that you have in your hand?"

"In my hand, ma'am? Oh! nothing—only a piece of old paper I picked off the floor."

"Give it me."

"No, no!" I exclaimed, forgetting myself. "You shan't see it. It is not for you. Jane, you must not give it up."

At this unexpected outburst on my part, poor Jane was completely dumbfounded. I had cut off every means of retreat.

"Give that note to me," repeated Aunt Tessie.

"Indeed, ma'am, it's nothing—only a bit of Miss Katie's exercise paper that was lying about."

"Do you hear what I say to you? If you refuse to obey my orders, Jane, you will quit my service to-morrow morning," said my aunt, still holding out her hand.

The housemaid looked at me imploringly, delivered up the note, burst into tears, and left the room. As for myself, I sat on the edge of the bed, sullen, revengeful, and prepared for anything.

"You have no right to read another person's letter," I said, as Aunt Tessie drew my wretched scribble from its covering.

The remark had no affect upon her. She unfolded the discoloured sheets and read what was written on them through to the end. As she did so I watched her face grow still more dark and stern.

"So," she said slowly, when she had finished, "*this* is the use you put the Holy Bible to, Miss Arundel!—to write disgraceful love-letters to a young man whose acquaintanceship I have already told you I intend you shall give up. And to lead a poor ignorant girl like Jane away from her duty by asking her to deliver them! Disobedience, immodesty, falsehood—these are the fruits of the religious training I have given you—the reward for eleven years' care, and protection, and trouble!"

I would not answer her; I was too indignant and too unhappy; but sat on my self-elected throne, kicking my feet against the ironwork of the bed.

"Are you not going to answer me, miss? What do you mean by this conduct—this deception—this ingratitude?"

"I have nothing to be grateful for," I muttered, "and I haven't deceived you, for I told you I was engaged to Hugh; and I am; and I won't give him up."

Aunt Tessie's face turned white with anger. She had neglected me so long, permitted me (for her convenience) to take so much my own way in all matters that did not come under her immediate supervision, that now, in this first battle of any consequence between us, she was thunderstruck to find how much obstinacy and boldness there were in my composition.

"Very good," she replied with tremulous anger. "Very good, Miss Katharine. Your conduct determines me how to act. I shall take this letter to Mr. Dean the first thing to-morrow morning, and beg that he will at once inclose it to Master Power's papa. Then you will see how long this kind of thing will be permitted to continue."

"It will be mean! It will be dishonourable!" I cried. "If you are dishonourable towards me, how can you expect me to be honourable towards you? I tell you what, Aunt Tessie! If you let Mr. Dean

read my letter, or send it to Sir Thomas Power, I will never obey you again—that I won't! but walk with Hugh whenever I choose, and write to him as often as I like!"

"I will undertake to see you do not further misbehave yourself, Katherine!" replied my aunt, with unaltered tone, as she lifted the tray of tea and bread-and-butter which poor kind-hearted Jane had smuggled up to me, and, carrying it out of the room, locked the door behind her.

I heard the key turn in the lock, and leapt off my bed in impotent rage at the indignity of being made a prisoner. It was hard—bitterly hard, so I thought—to be locked in like a common criminal; but had Aunt Tessie left the tray behind her, I might have derived a little comfort from discussing its contents. But bereft of Lover, Liberty, and Tea all at one stroke, what heroine could bear such accumulation

of misfortune ? As Aunt Tessie's footsteps died away in the distance, and I realised she had no present intention of relenting, I threw myself back upon my bed, and, without undressing, sobbed myself to sleep !



## CHAPTER IV.

### HUGH TO THE RESCUE.

WHEN I waked the next morning, heated and unrefreshed from sleeping in my ordinary clothes, I could not at first remember why I should be as I was. But when I did remember, hope sprang up in my breast as the lark springs from her watery nest with the first blush of dawn. The dark pages of life never look so dark in the morning as they do at night; and with youth all feelings are so buoyant that no trouble lasts long. So I jumped out of bed, and had washed and re-dressed myself before Aunt Tessie's virgin eyes had opened on the world. I threw up the casement

window. No sound was to be heard, either indoors or out, except the twittering of the birds, as they hopped about to find their early breakfast. What should I do to amuse myself? A sudden thought struck me. I tried the door. No; it was still fastened! My aunt, then, had not repented of her harshness before she went to her own room. But I could not believe but that, as soon as she had risen, she would set me at liberty again. So I sat by the door to listen for the advent of my friend Jane. The sun was high in the heavens before she and her fellow-servant came creeping downstairs. They went on tiptoe lest they should wake their mistress, for they knew that they were late.

“Jane! Jane!” I said, in a loud whisper as they passed my door. Their only answer was a prolonged “Hush!” Then, after a moment’s pause, Jane put her lips to the keyhole and said:

“Don’t speak now, Miss Katie, for mercy’s sake! It’s as much as my place is worth to answer you. But I’ll come again, by-and-by! Hush!”

And with that assurance I was forced to be content.

Oh, how wearily the time went by! It seemed to be hours before Aunt Tessie left her room, which was next to mine. I heard her pause by my door and listen to hear what was going on within, and I gave two or three loud snores to pretend that I was happily asleep. Then she passed downstairs, and I remembered she had gone to her breakfast, and began to feel dreadfully hungry, and somewhat afraid lest my ruse should return on my own head by causing Aunt Tessie to reflect that, if I were unconscious, I could not possibly want anything to eat. About half an hour afterwards, however, I heard her mincing step reascending the staircase, and a sudden

desire to avoid her made me leap, clothes and all, into bed again, and pretend to be fast asleep. I heard her unlock the door, and, entering the room, place something on the chest of drawers!

"Breakfast!" thought I; but I would not open my eyes by so much as the width of an eyelash. My aunt walked up to the bedside, and regarded me. "Little minx!" she said spitefully; "she has the impudence to sleep through it all! It is to be hoped her breakfast won't get cold!" she added, with a sneering laugh. And then she walked all round the room to see if she could find anything, and failing to do so (she had confiscated my Bible and bit of lead-pencil the night before), marched out again and locked the door behind her.

"Oh no, Aunt Tessie! my breakfast shan't get cold! don't you be afraid!" I said to myself, as soon as she was out of hearing, as I leaped out of bed and hurried to the chest of drawers.

On it was a tray, holding a plate and a tumbler. The plate contained dry bread; the tumbler, water. The sight sent all my spirit down to zero.

"I won't bear it!" I cried passionately, as I flung the piece of bread into the garden, and sent the tumbler after it. "I know she has plenty of money to keep me on—I heard the cook say so to Miss Thompson the other day; and she has never given me half enough to eat. And now, just because I have written a letter to Hugh, she wants to make me live on bread and water! But I won't! I'll starve first! and then she'll be hung for killing me—and a good job too!"

I was but a child, and I talked myself into a passion which could only find vent in tears, and make me feel more ill and hungry than I had done before.

"Miss Katie! Miss Katie!" said a voice under my door.

"Is that you, Jane? Oh! don't let her catch you!" I exclaimed, alarmed for the safety of my only friend.

"No fear of that, dear! for the old cat's off to the rectory—and if she hadn't taken the key of your door with her, I'd have had it open in a jiffy. But I daren't stay long, for she's sworn cook over to her side—only she's obliged to slip round to the greengrocer's for a cabbage. Look here, Miss Katie: have you had anything to eat?"

"Nothing, Jane! Aunt Tessie brought me some bread and water, but I threw them both out into the garden."

"I know you did, and broke her tumbler; and a nice way she is in about it! But you can't be starved, you know. So just pull this bit of string through the keyhole."

The end of a piece of stout twine made its appearance as she spoke, and I pulled it towards me.

“That’s right, miss ! And now go and let it down out of your window, but hold the end tight, whatever you do, for I may never get the chance to give you another.”

I comprehended the kindness of her invention now, and, doing as she desired me, I soon drew up a little basket with bread and cheese in it, and some biscuits and a bottle of milk.

“Stow all them things safe away, for heaven’s sake, when you’ve done with ’em !” cried the good-natured girl ; “and keep the string and the basket, for I bet we shall want ’em again this evening.”

“Oh ! how good you are, Jane !” I said, as I received my treasures through the open window ; “and what a jolly way this is of having one’s breakfast ! I believe you could come up yourself if you tried : just climb that bit of apple-tree, and walk along the branches, and give a little jump. It looks quite easy, Jane, doesn’t it ?”

"Seeming and being are two different things," replied the girl, though she surveyed the tree carefully as she spoke. "Don't you be trying to come down that way, Miss Katie, or you'll break your neck, maybe!"

I laughed at the idea. I was too happy at that moment, eating my bread and cheese, to think about it.

"You'll let me know all that goes on, won't you, Jane?" I demanded presently. "If you write it on a scrap of paper, I can pull it up so easily with my string!"

"Well, I ain't much of a scribe, Miss Katie, but as far as I can do it, I will. Anyways, my dear, if Miss Harundel don't let you out by this evening, cook and I will kick up a shindy about it, that you may be sure of."

But Aunt Tessie did not let me out by that evening, nor the evening after, and at last I became quite desperate. Even the



companionship of Miss Drayton, or the perusal of the lesson-books I had so much contemned, would have been a relief to me; but the silence and the solitude, and the uncertainty of what was going on in the outside world, nearly drove me frantic. My aunt did it with a view to breaking the rebellious spirit I had displayed; but she went the worst way to work that she could possibly have determined on. A few kind words; an inclination to sympathise with my youthful trouble, would have brought me in tears of penitence to her feet; for mine was not an ungrateful disposition, and the intense, though unconscious, yearning for love which possessed me was probably the reason that had made me attach myself with an earnestness far beyond my years to my boy-lover. To treat me as Aunt Tessie was treating me then, was to make me turn with all the greater longing to his company

and affection ; to think with rapture of the pleasures and dignities he had promised me ; and to be ready, at all risks, to break away from the fetters which kept us from each other.

Jane took care, even at the peril of her situation, to keep me well supplied with food during those two weary days of imprisonment. Had Aunt Tessie had her way, she would have fed me—as indeed she imagined I was fed—on bread and water. Twice a day I heard her footsteps mount the stairs, and her hand unlock my chamber door ; then the cook would enter with the scanty fare, and set it down upon the chest of drawers, not daring even to give me a look of encouragement for fear of the gaoler standing outside ; for after that first morning Aunt Tessie refused to enter my room. Whether she was afraid of my reproaches, or that I should do her some bodily injury, I know not ; but she held

no further communication with me than was effected by her unlocking and locking the door whenever the servant entered with my food, or to perform the offices necessary in my bedroom. Jane—on account of her friendly disposition towards me—with my aunt's consent, I never saw.

But on the evening of the second day, when the dusk had fallen, and it was thought safe to draw up the little basket, I found in it, beside the usual provisions, a candle, a box of matches, and an undirected letter. How eagerly I opened it! I thought it must be from Hugh; but I was disappointed. It came instead from Jane:

“ der miss katy i wanted to git up to the rectry and see mr powr before this but she keep so sharp she wunt let us leve the hous but i hop to slip rund this evening wen shes at church and will tell him al wat as happen

so keep up your sperits miss katy and mab-be i shall ave a letter for you wen i cum back."

I kissed the ill-favoured piece of paper again and again. This was the next best thing to having a letter from Hugh. If he could only learn how I was being treated, I was sure that, somehow, all would be right. I had the largest of faith in the prowess, skill, and courage of my young lover; and so far my childish discernment had not misled me.

I heard the bells ringing for evening service (it was a Friday night), and knew that nothing short of an impending earthquake would prevent my Aunt Tessie from going to "sit under" her favourite minister. The rector too must be present, and most of his pupils. Hugh Power alone, on account of his difference of faith, being exempt from attendance. What a capital

opportunity! How I hoped Jane would find him at home—walking about the garden, perhaps, with his beloved pipe in his mouth, or feeding his dogs, or perhaps even writing me a letter. I sat at the window eating my tea with almost a light heart, and wondering how much Hugh had heard about me and the punishment Aunt Tessie had seen fit to put upon me. Something he must have heard, I felt convinced, or else why should he not have tried to see me during these last two days? Oh! I was so glad that Jane was going to the rectory. It would all come right now! Hugh was sure to make it right. What could I give Jane to prove how grateful I was for her kindness? As I was thinking thus, talking half to myself in the gloaming, and leaning half out of my bedroom window, till my hands could almost touch the waving boughs of the old apple-tree beneath it, I heard a hasty footstep on the grass below.

"Is that you, Jane?" I whispered cautiously.

There was no answer; but I saw a dark figure swing itself into the apple-tree, and heard the crackling of the smaller branches that gave beneath its weight as it ascended rapidly towards me.

"It *can't* be Jane!" I said to myself, and a strong hope, that was half fear, began to work within me.

"Oh, do speak!" I cried presently, as the figure commenced to crawl along the bough, that I could almost touch with my hand; "do say something! I am beginning to be frightened! Who are you?"

"I am Hugh, darling!" said the voice of my lover, as his two strong hands grasped the window-sill. "Move that table away, Katie, and let me swing myself up into the room."

"Oh! can you? *may you?*" I exclaimed, in

some dismay at so unusual a proceeding, although I moved the table as he desired me.

“I don’t know whether I *may*, but I am sure I *can*,” he answered as he threw one leg astride the window-sill, and drew me towards him. “And now, my poor little darling, we have no time to spare. Put on your hat as quick as you can, Katie! I have come to take you away from all this!”

## CHAPTER V.

### I AM REALLY MARRIED.

"To take me away, Hugh?—but where?"

"Up to my sister, Mrs. Delancy, in London. That's Juliet, the second, you know—the very jolliest girl in the world. As good-natured as can be, and awfully fond of me."

"But, Hugh, dear!" I was speaking in a very stifled voice now, which came from somewhere close to Hugh's budding beard, "what will she say when she sees me?"

"Say! why, nothing, except that it's all right. You don't know Juliet. She'd cut off her right hand to oblige me; and when she hears that you are to be my wife—"

"Oh, Hugh!"



"Well! didn't you promise it, Katie?"

"Of course I did!"

"And do you suppose, after that, that I will allow you to be bullied and starved as this horrid old woman is trying to bully and starve you? Not a bit of it! If you can tie up a bundle of your clothes quickly, and throw it out of window, well and good, Katie: but if not, you must come with me just as you are!"

"But, Hugh, dear, how can I? I haven't got any proper things to go to your sister's house in, and—and—I haven't got any money to pay for my journey either."

"My darling little simpleton! are you so green as to imagine I will let you pay anything for yourself? And as for the clothes, Katie, Juliet will soon get you everything you want, and then in a few days we'll be married, and off to Paris, and out of Aunt Tessie's clutches for evermore."

"Oh, Hugh! it will be delightful, but how did you hear it all?"

"Well, old Dean was at me about it yesterday, and because I wouldn't promise to give you up, he telegraphed to my father, I believe, or at least he threatened to do so. So I had been thinking all to-day how I could possibly get at you, and when Jane came over to the rectory this evening I spotted her in a moment. To hear you were locked up and kept on bread and water was enough for me. I don't think I was ten minutes packing my portmanteau and sending it off to the station. And now we must be after it at once Katie, or we shall miss the eight o'clock train."

"And your portmanteau has really gone, Hugh?" I said, with open eyes.

"Really and truly, so I must go with it, whatever you choose to say."

"Oh, don't leave me behind!" I cried imploringly.

"As if I would! Why, what am I here for, you little goose! Are you good at climbing, Katie?"

"You know I am! Don't you remember the day I tore my muslin frock in the old crab-tree?"

"Ay! that was a black Monday. Well, I'm going to hold this big branch like that—quite steady—and you must creep along it till you reach the trunk. Do you think you can do it?"

"I am sure I can—if—if *you will shut your eyes, Hugh.*"

"All right, darling! I will keep them tight closed. But don't tumble, for Heaven's sake."

He seized the bough in his strong hands, and, with every pulse beating at the prospect of liberty, I landed myself, though, I fear, in no very elegant fashion, at that part of the trunk of the apple-tree where the branches commence to divide.

"I'm all safe!" I said, in a gleeful whisper.

"Thank God!" replied Hugh, and I don't think I had had any idea of how fond he was of me till I heard him render up that thanksgiving. "Now don't stir, darling, till I come to you. The drop is too deep for you to take alone."

He swung himself to the ground as he spoke, and, lifting me in his arms, set my feet once more on the old familiar grass-plot. He clasped my hand in his, walked swiftly up the garden path, vaulted over the wall, then helped me to join him as he had done before.

"And now, Katie, we must run," he said decidedly, "for if we miss this train your aunt may not give us the opportunity to catch another."

The fear of Aunt Tessie's wrath, and subsequent punishments, if she discovered the excess of my delinquency, lent me

wings, and I flew by his side like a little bird. There was no breathing space for reflection on what I was doing—for speculation as to how it would all end. There was only just time to reach the station; to see Hugh elbow his way through a crowd to the booking office; to hear him inquire for his portmanteau; to be pushed into a carriage; to see Guildford station moving off as in a dream, and to find I was all alone with my lover, and we had been delightfully naughty.

“Oh, *won't* she be in a rage,” I exclaimed as I turned my glowing cheeks towards him, “when she comes to find it out!”

“She shall never be in a rage again with you, my darling, at all events in my presence. Aunt Tessie's reign is over, until she finds another victim. It will be rather the worse for her if she interferes with *my wife*.”

God bless the lad! how proudly, how

firmly he said the words. Even at this distance of time I can hear his blithe young voice as he pronounced them.

The journey from Guildford to London is not a lengthy one. It was still early when we arrived in town.

"Where does your sister live?" I inquired, as Hugh and I drove off from the station in a cab.

"In Park Lane, darling; but I shan't take you there at once. She may have a dinner or a ball, or Heaven knows what, and we might take her too much by surprise. We will drive first to an hotel, and when I have seen you comfortable I'll run round to Juliet's, and make it all straight for you."

I was quite willing to accede to anything he might propose. I looked on him as so very much grown up in comparison with myself. So we proceeded to the hotel and ordered dinner, at which the waiter looked surprised, but served the meal nevertheless,

and waited on us during its continuance with the utmost gravity.

By the time it was concluded I was very tired and very sleepy, being oppressed by none of those doubts and fears which would have harassed a more experienced spirit, and prevented its taking rest. So Hugh put his rug over my feet and tucked me up comfortably on the sofa, and bade me go to sleep whilst he visited his sister Juliet. And like a child, as I was, I did go to sleep, without even taking the trouble to dream that all my little woes were ended.

It must have been nearly eleven o'clock when Hugh returned. He entered the room noisily, threw his hat and cane upon the table, and called to the waiter from the open door to bring him a "brandy and soda." I was awake in a minute.

"Oh, Hugh, dear! have you come back? Where is your sister?"

"Well, I'm rather in a fix, Katie; it's

an awful bore, and I had not the least idea of it, but Juliet's out of town."

"Where has she gone to?"

"The Isle of Wight, the woman says; but there's hardly any one in the house. It seeme one of the servants broke out suddenly with typhoid fever, and my sister and all her children were sent off at once. It's beastly awkward, isn't it?"

"I hope none of them will catch the fever," I said anxiously.

"I hope not. They seem to have taken precautions enough. But what am I to do with you, Katie? I can't let you go into the house, because the sick servant is there still. It's the most horrid sell, my sister being away, I ever knew in my life."

"Why can't I stay here?" I said ingenuously.

"My innocent little darling! Well, I suppose you must; but it's not what I intended for you, Katie. However, I'll tell you



what I'll do. You shall have a room here, and I'll sleep at my old quarters in Jermyn Street, and the very first thing to-morrow morning I'll go to Father Aylmer of St. Charles' Chapel, and see what he can do for us."

"Oh, but you mustn't go away, Hugh!" I cried, clinging to him. "You mustn't leave me here alone. I shall be so dreadfully frightened."

"My own Katie, what *can* I do? I wish I knew anybody in London with whom you could stay for to-night. But as I don't, I see no alternative."

"But why need you go to another hotel? Stay in this hotel, Hugh. I shall think every moment that Aunt Tessie has found me out, if you don't. I shall dream of nothing but horrors if you leave me here alone."

"Very good, I won't leave you alone then," he said, with a sigh. Poor boy! I think the responsibility he had undertaken began to weigh upon him even then. And

I can remember that he looked very awkward as he summoned the waiter and gave the necessary orders for my reception.

"Waiter, this young lady—my sister," he added with a kind of jerk—"will sleep here to-night. I am taking her to her friends. She has just left school," he went on, as if that circumstance could be of any consequence to the waiter.

"Very good, sir! Is the young lady's luggage downstairs, sir?"

"No! she has left her luggage at the station. It is to be sent after her. Just tell the chamber-maid to come up here and attend her to her room. You are ready to go to bed, aren't you, Katie?" he continued addressing me.

"Yes, Hugh!" I answered mournfully. I had not anticipated there would be so much difficulty attendant on my being quartered for the night. As the waiter disappeared, Hugh came up and kissed me.

“Good night, darling!” he said fervently. “I wish I hadn’t told those lies, Katie. I don’t know what Father Aylmer will say when he hears it; but it all seemed so queer, I felt as though I must say something. It is better the people here should think you are my sister, or they may begin to talk, and that is so unpleasant.”

“But they will find out it is a mistake when we’re married, Hugh, won’t they?”

“Oh yes, of course; but perhaps they won’t hear of it, and if they should it will not matter by that time. So good-night once more, dear Katie. Sleep well, and I shall have seen Father Aylmer before we meet again.”

“What has he to do with it?” I demanded curiously.

“Why, I hope he will consent to marry us.”

“Must we be married by a Roman Catholic?”

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"Yes! and by a Protestant into the bargain. I wish there was only need for the one ceremony, Katie. Well, never mind. You will be my own dear little Protestant, whatever other people may say."

He kissed me again, and dismissed me to the care of the chambermaid, whose surprise at my having no nightgown, and being obliged to borrow a brush and comb, led me into the commission of half-a-dozen, if not more, falsehoods to account for the absence of my luggage. For I had not even stayed to make up the bundle Hugh had suggested to me, so eager had been my desire to quit the scene of my imprisonment and starvation.

When the chambermaid left me, I felt terribly lonely. I had always slept by myself at Aunt Tessie's, but then the room was small and bare, and I could see into every corner of it. But the large apartment of which I had been made the temporary owner

looked so much too splendid and too vast for such a mite as I was, that it frightened me, and when I hid my head under the bedclothes of the huge four-poster, I forgot that Hugh was sleeping but a few yards off, and almost wished myself back again in Ivy Cottage. But when, after much twisting and turning, I at last managed to fall asleep, my slumbers were healthy and profound. The sun was streaming through the window-blind when I awoke next morning, and some one was knocking continuously at my chamber door.

“Who is that?” I cried impatiently.  
“Come in.”

The chambermaid who had attended me the night before entered with a card in her hand.

“An old gentleman, miss—looks like your grandpa, I should say,—wants to see you. He’s a-waiting in the coffee-room, and told me to bring up this card.”

I took the card in my hand, which was inscribed—

*Sir Thomas Power,  
Gentian's Cross,  
Dublin.*

The name appalled me. I forgot my rôle.

"Oh, it's not for me!" I said hurriedly, "it must be for the young gentleman,—for Mr. Power; it's his father, I know."

"Your brother's papa, my dear! Then it must be your papa too."

"No! it isn't—at least—he didn't ask for me, did he?"

"I think so, miss; but all the waiter said was that I was to give that card to you, and say the gentleman was waiting."

"But he *can't* want me," I said, in an agony of apprehension. "I don't know him even! Oh! where *is* Mr. Power? Do take the card to him, and say his papa wants to see him."

"But I think the young gentleman's out, miss. And I am sure the old gentleman

asked for you, or the waiter would never have made such a mistake. Can I help you to dress, miss? I dare say he won't mind waiting a bit."

Some vague idea that, if I did *not* make my toilet, Sir Thomas Power might insist on my being dragged before him as I was, made me accede to her request, and I hurried on my clothes as best I might. What a strange figure I must have looked when I was arrayed in them! A plain pink-and-white cotton frock, none the cleaner for having swept the branches of the apple-tree! a black apron, which in the hurry of flight I had forgotten to change; skirts that hardly covered my ankles; and unbound hair that flowed down lower than my waist. Such was the appearance first presented to Sir Thomas Power by his son's elected choice. As soon as I was ready, I ran down to the sitting-room. Fear took me there so promptly. I was afraid that Sir

Thomas might have come with the intention of carrying his son back to the rectory, and leaving me all alone to brave Aunt Tessie's anger. My heart beat violently as I turned the handle of the door. But I need not have been so frightened. Sir Thomas Power was certainly there, but so was his son. At that sight my courage returned.

"Hugh!" I cried joyfully.

"Here she is, sir;" said my lover, as he took me by the hand and presented me to his father.

"That! Why, good heavens! she is only a child!" replied Sir Thomas, as he surveyed me through his double eyeglass.

"I am fifteen," I said grandly, as I drew myself up to my full height.

"And you two want—you two *expect* to be *married!*" resumed the old gentleman sarcastically.

"We *intend* to be," replied his son, as he threw an arm protectingly around me.



"Hold hard, Hugh. Don't talk nonsense to me, or this business may not end in the way you like best. You are not in a position to say what you *intend* to do."

"I am of age," said Hugh proudly.

"True; but this child is not of age. She is under sixteen, and you cannot marry her without the consent of her guardians, unless you take a false oath to the effect that you have obtained it. Yet you steal her away from the protection of her aunt, and bring her up to town, and let her pass a night under the same roof as yourself! Now do you understand the position in which you have placed her?"

At this question I was surprised to see Hugh's gallant head droop. He knew so much more of the world than I did, that he at once comprehended the difficulty of the situation; but to my innocent ears his father's speech conveyed no other meaning but that he was angry Hugh should have brought me to an hotel.

"We did try to go to Park Lane, sir!" I exclaimed eagerly, "but Mrs. Delancey had left London. And I hope you won't be angry with Hugh, for I want to be married just as much as he does; and I asked him to take me away from Aunt Tessie. Didn't I, Hugh?"

"Have you heard of the way in which she was treated, sir, for only saying she was fond of me? How she was shut up in her room, poor child! and kept on bread and water?"

( "At least, I should have been if Jane hadn't brought me things," I interpolated.)

"And how harsh Miss Arundel was to her, and always has been ever since we were first acquainted? Katie has endured a perfect purgatory with her aunt."

"No; I have heard none of these things, Hugh. How should I? You had not even confided to me the young lady's name. Had you done so, this unhappy

affair might have turned out very differently. The first intelligence that reached me on the subject came in a telegram from Mr. Dean, entreating my immediate presence at Guildford. I reached there late last night, to find you and Miss Katie had already flown. I had an interview with Miss Arundel, who was naturally in a most excited state of mind, and followed you as quickly as I could. My object in doing so, Hugh, you must of course be aware, is to restore this young lady at once to her friends."

At this announcement I gave a yell, and Hugh looked terribly distressed.

"Sir!—father! I entreat you to think what you are saying. You cannot take her back—not now. It is impossible. You will make me miserable for life if you do so. Can you suppose for a moment I would have carried her off had I imagined there was any obstacle to our marriage? But I

thought, since I was of age, it would be sufficient. Oh, father! don't think of me—think of Katie! What has she done that she should suffer for it, as she will suffer if you persist in your intention?"

"And pray what do you wish me to do?" inquired Sir Thomas.

"Let us be married, sir. Father Aylmer will marry us this morning, if you will only give your consent; and I am my own master, you know, and have come into my property, and I might do much worse if I were left to myself."

The last argument seemed to carry some weight with the old gentleman. He stopped and considered.

"What will your mother say to it?" he said, after a pause.

"What *should* she say? Katie has no money, but I have plenty for us both; and she's a lady, and—and—we love each other,"

added Hugh bashfully, though his arm was still closely folded round me.

"Ay, ay; but there's a worse objection to her than all these, and I'm sorry, Hugh, more than I can tell you, that a son of mine should have forgotten it. This young lady is not of the same faith as yourself, and I've seldom seen any happiness come from mixed marriages."

"What's her faith got to do with my love for her?" said his son quickly. "Does it make any difference in her appearance or her disposition? I know she's a Protestant."

"But I'm not a Protestant," I interposed. "Not if Aunt Tessie is one, that is to say."

"What are you, then, my dear?" demanded Sir Thomas.

"Nothing, that I know of."

"That is worse than the other," he rejoined gravely. "But, however, Hugh, it is time we finished this discussion. If I chose I could prevent this absurd marriage

by carrying Miss Katie back to her aunt; but, in consideration of her birth and the feelings of her family, no less than your own character, I simply place before you the disadvantages of the connection, and leave it to yourself to decide whether you will marry the girl or not."

"Of course I will! I never intended doing anything else," replied Hugh. "And as for my mother, when she once knows it to be irrevocable, she'll get over it fast enough."

"Well, well, my boy, you were always self-willed, and I only trust the blessing you have forgotten to seek may find you out nevertheless, and rest upon your wife and yourself. But it's a terrible risk—a terrible risk."

"Now, don't go and undo all the good of your first wish by croaking out such dismal prophecies, father. I have no fears on the subject whatever, and as soon as we

have returned from our wedding tour, Katie and I will go and settle down at Derry Lodge, like two old fogies, and become tillers of the ground for the rest of our lives—won't we, Katie?"

"I will do anything you like, Hugh," I whispered in reply.

Sir Thomas Power regarded us for a few minutes in silence, then sighed deeply.

"Did you see Father Aylmer this morning, Hugh?" he demanded presently.

"Yes, sir."

"And what did he say to you?"

"He was very much surprised, of course, and he was—Well, he was very angry," replied Hugh, with an effort; "but he said, as matters were, he supposed we had better be married as soon as possible."

"And cannot you perceive the disgrace of such a concession?" returned Sir Thomas.

Hugh hung his head.

"Father, don't make it worse for me

than it is. I've been an awful fool—I see that. But I had no idea Juliet was out of town. Why on earth didn't she write and tell me they were going to leave? Who would have expected to find them all away in the midst of the season?"

"Your sister telegraphed to us, and begged we would communicate with you. Letters are not always safe in such a case. I hope you have not been to the house, Hugh!"

"Only for a minute, in the hall. That couldn't hurt any one. But you will acknowledge it wasn't *my* fault Katie had to come to an hotel."

"I can't acknowledge that, my boy. It's been your fault, as far as I can see, all through. The only thing left now is to remedy it as far as lies in our power. Before leaving Guildford, I obtained Miss Arundel's consent to my seeing you married as soon as I found you—should you not



have been married before. As certain preliminaries are inevitable to the event, you had better come with me at once, Hugh, and we will procure what is necessary. Meanwhile, Miss Katie must remain here, and we will return and fetch her at eleven o'clock."

I had but a very unformed notion as to why they left me, and was kept in a state of miserable suspense until their return. Then, by Hugh's joyous face and whispered assurance that it was "all right," I guessed, more than knew, that I was about to be married. I was hurried, just as I was, into a cab by Sir Thomas Power, carried off to one church, of which I remember nothing but that it seemed to be a confused mass of light, and warmth, and colour, and sweet smells, and then to another, which was blank and dreary, and made me shudder; and at both places Hugh and I knelt down and had words said over

us, to which I did not listen, and which I probably should not have comprehended had I done so. Only, when we left the last church, a gold ring was on my left hand, and I understood, though very vaguely, that my name was Power.

"What do you intend to do next?" asked Sir Thomas of his son, as we stood once more within the precincts of the hotel.

"Have some lunch!" replied Hugh, who was grinning from ear to ear. "You spoiled my breakfast for me, Katie, and I must make up for it now."

"And I am so hungry, too," I ventured to reply.

"Poor child! I dare say you are, and half frightened out of your wits into the bargain. Never mind, darling! you behaved like a little brick, and it's all over now, my pet, and we've got nothing to do but enjoy ourselves!"

"When I asked just now what your

intentions were, Hugh," recommenced Sir Thomas, who did not appear to approve of his son's levity, "I meant, where do you wish to go, now you *are* married?"

"Oh, I don't know—Dover to-night, I suppose, and Paris to-morrow. Katie shall choose—it's all one to me."

"Oh! I should like Paris, Hugh," I interposed.

"You must get her some clothes before you leave town, you know," said his father.

"Must I? Oh, by Jove! yes, I suppose I must. Why didn't the old lady send up her things by you, sir?"

"I did not offer to take such a responsibility upon myself."

"Besides, they were all very old, Hugh. They wouldn't have been of any use now."

"Wouldn't they, indeed, ma'am? Conceited little puss! She thinks 'Mrs. Hugh Power' is going to have everything of the very best, does she? Well, she's about

right there. So, just look in the paper, Katie, and give me the name of one of those female magicians who supply wedding outfits at an hour's notice ; and, as soon as I've had my lunch, I'll go off and send her up to you with a cartload of things to choose from!"

"And a box to put them in, Hugh."

"All right, darling ! and a cord to put round the box. Everything shall be complete in time to catch the five o'clock train to Dover. You will stay and dine here, father?"

"No, Hugh. My business is ended, and the sooner I go home the better. I wish I had happier news to carry them."

"Don't be 'down' about it, sir. You've got the jolliest little daughter you ever had, and worth my six sisters all put together. Now don't let mother make a fuss about nothing. By-the-way, I suppose my account is transferred to Coutts' by this time, and I can draw on them as I choose?"

"Yes. The transfer was made the day after you came of age. Don't be extravagant, Hugh. Remember, five hundred a year doesn't go far."

"Oh, we shall live like fightingcocks on that down at Derry Lodge. And as for the rest—you forgive me, father—don't you?"

"I forgive you," replied Sir Thomas.

"And kiss the child," continued Hugh, as he pushed me forward.

The old man took me in his arms and embraced me kindly.

"You are my daughter now," he said, "but you are still more the wife of my son. Be a good wife, and you are sure to be a good daughter. God bless you!"

Then he turned once more to Hugh.

"God bless you, my son!" he said solemnly, and left the room.

## CHAPTER VI.

MR. AND MRS. HUGH POWER.

To imagine Hugh and me setting out upon our wedding tour is to imagine a boy and girl, just let loose from school, indulging in the wildest and maddest pranks imaginable. Marriage no more made a woman of myself than it made a man of him. No thought of the importance of the step we had taken, of the displeasure we had raised, of the irresponsible childhood we had left behind us, or the uncertain future that lay before, came like a cloud to darken the bright morning of our lives. It was all sunshine, and we revelled in it—yet not with the appreciation we should have

done had we passed through the storm beforehand. But we took pleasure as a right, and were not even troubled to think if it would last. We giggled from morning till night—eat and drank everything that was placed before us—ran about like a couple of lunatics escaped from Bedlam—were never tired, or sick, or out of spirits—and thought marriage the most delightful thing that had ever been invented. I was charmed with the articles of attire that Hugh had hastily procured for me in London; and for the first week changed my dress three times a day, just to see how I looked.

At the end of that period we were in Paris, living at an hotel on the Boulevards, and the enchantment of my new existence was at its height. Yes! at its height. How soon was all its brightness quenched by the relentless Fate that was even then stealing on us with noiseless steps! When I had

been in Paris a few days, I received a letter from my Aunt Tessie, inclosing a hundred pounds to buy my trousseau. It was a very stern and offended letter, naturally, and insinuated a great deal more than it said. But she forwarded a cheque for the amount which had been put on one side to provide my wedding outfit, and did not say that she would have nothing more to do with me.

“*Had* you waited,” wrote Aunt Tessie, with many dashes, “as the religious and moral training you have received from me would have led *any one* to conclude you *would* have waited, until you had attained a *decent* and *respectable* age to be married, I should have been able to present you with *twice* this sum; but as you have chosen, contrary to all reasonable expectation, to *disgrace* yourself and me by a *clandestine marriage*, and at a time of life when you ought to be in *the nursery*, all I can do is to



send you what is your own, and to trust you will make as good a use of it as your *inexperience* and *utter ignorance* of shopping will permit you."

How we laughed at the letter, and how contemptuously we picked up the poor little cheque that fluttered out of it. For Sir Thomas had presented Hugh with a note for three hundred before they parted, to defray the expenses of his wedding tour.

"Give me the cheque, Katie, and I'll get it changed for you. It will do to pay for all the fripperies you may set your affections on whilst here," cried light-hearted Hugh. "Well, the old girl's letter is not so bad after all, is it, darling? We *have* been a couple of scamps, there's no doubt of it; but they'll hardly try and reform us now, eh, Katie? What's this Aunt Tessie says?—that you ought to be in 'the nursery'! Write and tell her you admire her good sense, and that you will be there long before herself."

"Oh! I wish I dared! What a rage she'd be in!"

"But you'll never be afraid of her again Katie."

"Hardly, whilst you are with me, Hughie! I shall go and call upon her in grand state when we go back, and leave my card!"

"You little ape! I fancy your sailing into that tiny room with a long train skirt, and sweeping up all the little mats after you."

"And sitting on the sofa in lemon-kid gloves, with my hands crossed on my lap—so! And talking to Aunt Tessie in the politest of tones. 'I hope I see you well, Miss Arundel. The weather is very warm, is it not? Remarkably so for England! But you would have been quite astonished if you could have felt the heat whilst Mr. Power and I were in Paris.'"

And I strutted about the room, and

bowed, and gave myself airs and graces, till Hugh screamed with laughter.

"Katie! you'll kill me! Oh! I'd give worlds to see your first interview with Aunt Tessie! It will be as good as a play."

"You *shall* see it, darling. Do you suppose I'd go without you?" I said, as I came up to him and cuddled the curly brown head he laid against my childish shoulder.

"Tell me," I continued earnestly, "do I look so very, *very* young?"

"You don't look *old*, pet!" he answered.

"Of course not! Do you wish me to be a shrivelled-up old creature, with fishy eyes and a wrinkly neck, like Aunt Tessie or Mrs. Dean?"

"Heaven forbid!" he cried involuntarily.

"Well, then, listen! I know I'm not, but don't I look—well, not *quite*, perhaps, but a little like a woman? When I have

my train skirts on, you know, and a bonnet, would people think I am only fifteen then?"

"I don't know, Katie," said Hugh dubiously; "I'm almost afraid that they do. When we were coming out of the Madeleine yesterday, I missed you, and the cicerone, seeing me look about, informed me that '*mademoiselle ma sœur*' had gone down the steps, and that he did not think '*la petite*' enjoyed seeing the church as much as I did."

"The old wretch! He must be as blind as a bat! or else he meant to be impudent. Why, Hughie! I had my hair turned up too! Oh! this is not to be borne. I will never wear a glove on my left hand again, if I am to be insulted like this."

My husband took the marvellous left hand, on the thin, unformed fingers of which my rings rattled up and down and jostled one another, in his, and looked at it earnestly.

"It will be a very pretty little hand by-and-by," he remarked, "when it has had time to grow plump and dimpled."

"You rude boy ! not to think it is pretty now. Well, whatever it is like, it is yours, and you'll have to keep it for ever, and ever, and ever ! won't you ?"

"Perhaps," he said quietly. "And where shall we go this morning, Katie ? To Notre Dame, or—"

"Oh, not to any more churches !" I said quickly. "I *am* so sick of them !"

The slightest of all slight shades passed over Hugh's bright boyish face. He was devoted to his own religion, and nothing gave him greater pleasure than to see the various relics, pictures, statues, and carvings which turn the Catholic churches abroad into galleries of art. He did not mind my saying I had seen enough of them, though ; what he minded was the tone in which I said it.

"We will go to the Louvre instead then, darling," he said cheerfully ; " or to the Musée ; or we will take a carriage, and drive out to the Bois. Which shall it be ? "

" I want to go by steamer to St. Cloud. There is a fair there to-day, the garçon says ; and they sell such lovely gingerbread with almonds in it ! Do come to St. Cloud, Hughie, and buy gingerbread ! "

" I will go anywhere you like, Katie. But you are sure you won't be too much tired, darling ? There is the theatre to-night, remember. "

" *Tired*, Hugh !—as if I was ever tired ! I'd like to go to a concert before the theatre and a dance afterwards, if I could do such a thing. "

" You dissipated girl ! I shall take you back to England such a rake that Aunt Tessie won't know you. Well, put on your hat, if you mean going ; for St. Cloud will be a whole day's work. "

I ran upstairs to do as he requested me. At the head of them I nearly overturned two English ladies.

"Who's that child?" I heard one say to the other.

"Child! Why, she's a married woman."

"Impossible! She looks like a school-girl."

These words interested me so much, that when I had gained the second flight of stairs I hung over the banisters to listen to the rest of their conversation.

"Nevertheless, she is a Mrs. Power. Her husband is the son of Sir Thomas Power, of Gentian's Cross. Maurice pointed him out to me yesterday at the table d'hôte. A handsome young fellow, but quite a boy. What a sin it is to let children like that make fools of themselves!"

"Ah poor things! they don't know what's before them," sighed the other lady.

"The girl's rather pretty, I think—at

least she will be by-and-by; but *he* is undeniably good-looking."

"I should like to see him."

"Hush! here he comes!" and from my perch I could watch Hugh rushing upstairs, two steps at a time, until his encounter with my friends compelled him to moderate his pace.

"Hollo, Katie!" he exclaimed, as he passed them, and came in sight of me.

"*Mr. Power!*" I answered, with the utmost dignity of which my shrill voice was capable, "at what time have you ordered the carriage for to-night?"

Hugh stared at me with unmitigated astonishment; but I placed my finger on my lips, to prevent his speaking.

"You would greatly oblige me," I continued, in a languid tone, "if you would let me know what your arrangements are for to-day, that I may prevent, if possible, their interfering with mine."



My husband still continued staring at me, with his large blue eyes full of mirth, and I heard the two ladies on the landing move away with a sound that seemed to me like stifled laughter.

"It is too bad!" I exclaimed hotly, as Hugh and I entered the bedroom. "Those abominable women were ridiculing us for being married so young—as if everybody wouldn't be old, if they only lived long enough. And I was determined to show them that, however young I may *look*, I know as much as other married ladies."

Hugh laughed till he could laugh no longer.

"Oh my dear child! you are *too* funny," he said at last. "I couldn't imagine what you were strutting and pluming yourself on the top of the landing for; but I see it now. I was awfully impressed, and I am sure they must have been too. No one could have mistaken you for a real married woman."

‘ *Mr. Power ! you would greatly oblige me* ’  
—oh, Katie, Katie ! what a queer little mortal you are to spend all one’s days with ! ”

“ Hughie, you do not understand. If I once let these people think I am only a child, they will never treat me with proper respect. And for your own sake—” I said grandly.

“ For my own sake, I never want you to be anything but Katie,” he answered, with his sweet, frank smile, as he drew me on his knee and kissed me.

That day at St. Cloud was a very happy one. It stands out amongst my memories of the past in colours that never fade. First of all there was the river steamboat, with its motley group of passengers, to amuse me ; then the varied and curious scenes presented on the banks ; lastly, St. Cloud, with its quaint surroundings, its beautiful summer palace, and the long line of booths, set out with every kind of gay-

coloured rubbish, calculated to catch the eye of inexperience. I rushed about from one place to another, delighted with everything I saw. I pulled about the contents of each booth, and bought more articles than I could possibly carry. I insisted upon Hugh letting me ride on one of the absurdly-painted animals—horses, stags, griffins, crocodiles, and what not—that went round and round in a ring to the music of the band. I purchased enough gingerbread to make me ill for a month. I wandered over the palace grounds, and over the palace itself (it being a day of admittance), until I had really exhausted the resources of St. Cloud, and began to think that it might be advisable to return to Paris and obtain some dinner, before we set off again for the theatre. And through all the heat and turmoil of that sultry afternoon, my boy husband followed me patiently about, carrying my worthless purchases, never

thwarting a single desire I expressed, and waiting on me as if I had been a queen; whilst I, thoughtless and selfish, never once considered whether *he* was enjoying himself or not, but followed my own inclination in all things, and imagined, since *I* was happy, Hugh could not possibly be otherwise. Yet, as we were going back to Paris in the boat, and he sat by my side whilst I gabbled on of all that I had seen, I did remark that his answers were fewer and more curt than they need have been. I turned and looked at him. His handsome face was towards the setting sun. Perhaps it was that light which made him look so pale.

"Have you a headache, Hughie?"

"No, darling."

"What's the matter with you?"

"I am only feeling a little tired."

"How funny! I am not tired a bit."

"Your legs have got less to carry," he

said laughingly, as he wrapped a shawl round me.

"Don't coddle me up," I cried, impatiently throwing it off.

"You will take cold, Katie. It grows chilly on the river after the sun has set."

"It is not chilly now—it is as hot as fire! Why, Hugh, *you* must feel cold. You are actually shivering."

"I feel the change, certainly; but perhaps it is only sitting still. I will take a few turns to wake myself up."

He began to walk up and down the deck as he spoke, and I watched him, and thought how tall, and strong, and brave he looked among the people on the steamboat, and felt my silly little heart throb with pride as I did so. But he certainly looked paler than usual.

We reached the hotel just in time for dinner. I was so hungry after my river excursion, that I did full justice to the meal,

and do not remember remarking if Hugh eat or not; but I know he drank a good deal; for I remonstrated with him for opening a second bottle of claret, and whisperingly asked him what he thought Aunt Tessie would say of his extravagance. When he rose from the table d'hôte I ran upstairs to prepare for the theatre; but I had not been in my room more than a few minutes when Hugh walked in and stood by the mantelpiece, with his head upon his hand.

“Katie darling,” he commenced.

“Well dear?”

“Do you want particularly to go to this theatre?”

“Oh, particularly! It's the last night of the piece, you know. You told me so yourself. Besides, it will be so jolly. But why do you ask?”

“It's nothing of consequence; only I've a little headache.”

"Oh, Hughie, what a bore! You must have got it from the sun. Can't you take anything to make it better?"

"I don't know. It doesn't signify."

"But you won't enjoy the theatre if you are in pain; and I *can't* enjoy a thing if you don't. Oh, do cure it before we go, Hughie."

"My own little darling, I will, if I can," he answered, taking my hand.

"How hot your hand is! You feel quite baked. Have some eau-de-Cologne, Hugh."

He took the eau-de-Cologne, and poured it on his head.

"Are you better now?" I asked anxiously.

"A little. And so you *very much* want to go to the theatre, Katie? Well, we *will* go. I'll get a 'pick-me-up' downstairs, and wait for you in the vestibule."

He turned, and left me to finish my dressing, and I—selfish little mortal!—without more than a passing regret, put on

my cloak and gloves, and joined him as he had desired me. As we drove away from the hotel I placed my hand in his.

“Your head *is* better, isn’t it, Hughie?”

“Much better, dear. There’s nothing like a brandy-and-soda to set one up. I feel quite clear again, now.”

He smiled as he spoke, and I was reassured. The play was a long and popular one; the house was crowded, and brilliantly lighted with gas; the atmosphere was oppressively hot. Hugh and I sat side by side in the stalls. I could not understand a word of the piece; but my liking for dramatic representations amounted to a passion, and I kept my eyes riveted to the stage, and followed the actions of each performer with the keenest interest. I spoke to my husband two or three times on first entering the theatre, and he answered me in his own good-natured way. But I saw that it was an effort to him to talk, and



so, after a while, I ceased to question him.

"I am sure your head aches still," I whispered, "so I shan't bother you any more, dear boy."

He smiled and nodded, and I returned to my own thoughts and occupations. Presently some one touched me on the shoulder. I started, and turned. It was an old gentleman from behind, who was standing bowing and pointing to something. Several other people were leaning forward with anxious countenances. I looked in the direction of their eyes. There, in the stall by my side, with his face turned upward to the glaring gas, lay my husband—fainted!

## CHAPTER VII.

### CLOUDING OVER.

ANY one would have been frightened. Any woman with a full knowledge of illness and all its symptoms would have been frightened to find a hale young man, of whom she had never thought but as in the fulness of life and vigour, suddenly lying unconscious beside her. As for myself my alarm amounted to absolute terror. I could only think that Hugh was dead, and my shrill scream rang through the theatre. Half the people in the stalls rose to their feet. The women gathered round me, and all chattered together in their attempts to soothe my fear : the men got hold of Hugh

somehow, and lifted him out into the corridor, where they loosened his cravat and waistcoat, and threw cold water on his face and opened a window to give him air. The ladies would have held me from his side, and kept on assuring me that *Monsieur mon frère* would recover much sooner if left to the charge of the gentlemen; and though from my unfamiliarity with their language I could not understand one-half of their rapid conversation, I contrived to hear those words, and to answer them with the indignant assertion, "*C'est mon mari.*" At which the French ladies, wondering much and talking more, fell back and let me go to Hugh, by whose side I knelt, crying as if my heart would break. But he did not move nor show the least sign of consciousness—neither the cold water nor air had any effect on him—he lay like a beautiful statue white and rigid. After a while some gentlemen who had left the

corridor returned with another stranger, whom I could see by his appearance was a doctor. He placed his hand on Hugh's heart, felt his pulse and turned up his eyelids with his thumb. Then in a moment, as it seemed to me, my husband's coat was stripped off, his arm bared, and the blood was spouting from it in a dark red stream; I screamed, and hid my eyes. The doctor spoke to me, but I was too frightened and nervous to be able to comprehend what he said; then he spoke of me to the bystanders, and shrugged his shoulders at their reply. Lastly, he lifted me gently away from Hugh's prostrate figure, and placed me at a little distance from him, where I knelt with clasped hands and bated breath, waiting—I hardly knew for what.

But after a few minutes my husband opened his eyes and tried to rise. They pushed him back into a recumbent posture.

"Hughie!" I exclaimed, in my new-born delight.

"Katie!" he murmured, feeling for me in the air with his hand. "Where am I? Have I been ill?"

"Oh! you have been so dreadfully ill, darling!"

"How stupid of me! Let us get home."

The doctor turned to me, and in broken English, inquired where we lived, and I told him. He supported Hugh down to a cab, and drove back to the hotel with us. The ladies and gentlemen loitering up and down the vestibule were very much surprised to see our disorderly arrival, and crowded round with expressions of sympathy and offers of assistance. But Hugh turned from them all to me.

"Don't let us be bothered by strangers, Katie. If this gentleman will be good enough to give me his arm up the stairs, I want no one but you. I shall be all right again to-morrow."

The doctor saw him safely into bed, felt his pulse, gave him a draught of some kind, and left, saying he would call again in the morning. As soon as he had closed the door I crept up to Hughie's side, and laid my inflamed face upon the pillow.

"Why! my little Katie, how you have been crying," he said in a languid tone.

"I'm not worth all this fuss, dear—"

"Oh, Hughie! How can you say so, when you are so ill, and I have been so terribly frightened!"

"It's only a headache. It'll be gone in the morning. I can't think what the deuce made me faint, though! I suppose it is the malaria of this town. Paris is awfully unhealthy at this season."

"Let us go away then! Let us go to the seaside, or some nice country place! I shall die if you go on being ill."

"My darling child, what nonsense you are talking! I shall be as right as a trivet

in a few hours. I suppose I've been overdoing it lately—but it's very queer. I never fainted in my life before."

"And it was such a dreadful faint, too! and the man took such lots of blood from your arm. It made me so sick."

"Poor little dear! It is rather hard upon you I should have knocked up so soon. But a good sleep is all I want; and I feel rather sleepy now."

"Do go to sleep, darling! and I'll undress and come to bed too."

"You mustn't do that, Katie. The doctor said you had better lie in the dressing-room to-night. I may be restless, and disturb you."

"I won't sleep in the dressing-room! You may want something in the night."

"If so, I will call. Do—dear—Katie to—oblige—me."

He was getting so drowsy he could hardly frame his sentences, so I let him drop off to sleep with his hand clasped in

mine; but I would not stir from his side, and there I sat, occasionally slumbering with my head upon the counterpane, until the morning dawned and the hotel was alive again. Hugh was still sleeping, though his hand had slipped from mine. I got up quietly and changed my dress, and wondered at what time I should order breakfast, or if he would have his in bed. I had not been able to decide when the *filie* knocked at the door with our hot water. She brought a message also. *Monsieur le médecin* was below, and wished to see my husband. What on earth, I thought, could he have come so early for; it was so stupid of him to disturb Hugh before he had had his breakfast; still I said he might come up, because I did not know what excuse to give for refusing to admit him. He came in grave and subdued, examined his patient's sleeping countenance, then followed me into the dressing-room.



"Has madame any friends in Paris?" he asked.

"None, sir, except Hugh. We were only married a fortnight ago."

He looked still more grave.

"All madame's friends, then, are in England?"

"Yes."

"Would it not be as well to let them know that monsieur is ill? Madame is very young to be left alone with him."

"But, sir, he is not going to be ill, is he? He says it is only a headache—that it will be all right after he has slept."

"Monsieur may feel better when he awakes, but it is possible the illness may continue for a few days. In that case would it not be better madame had some one with her to help in nursing?"

"But Hughie would not let anybody but me nurse him, monsieur. I am sure he would not! And all our friends live so

far away. It would not be worth while to bring them over for so short a time."

He shrugged his shoulders again.

"Madame must do as she thinks best. Sleep is certainly the best remedy monsieur can have, but he has a considerable amount of fever about him, and will require watching for a few days. I will look in again at noon."

I sat down, rather confounded and very unhappy at the doctor's remarks. He evidently did not think Hugh would be well to-day, or even to-morrow. We should have to put off our visits to the Louvre and Musée, and the excursion we had planned to Chantilly. How very tiresome! But I hardly believed Hugh could put them off. He hated being coddled. He would determine to go all the same, and the fresh air and the amusement would do him more good than all the medicine in the world.

I could not touch the coffee and rolls that the *fille* brought to my room for me, so anxious was I that Hugh should wake and assure me personally that he was better. At eleven he opened his eyes and spoke. I flew to his side, but the first look I cast on him convinced me that the doctor was right. He would certainly not be able to go out to-day.

"How do you feel, Hughie?" I commenced.

"Rather queer still, dear. I feel so heavy, and my limbs ache as if I had been beaten. What o'clock is it?"

"Eleven. What will you have for breakfast?"

"I—don't want—any—breakfast," he answered, as his head sank back upon the pillow and his eyes reclosed.

"Hugh! Hugh! are you going to sleep again?" I exclaimed, seeing all my hopes of a pleasant day vanish.

"Can't—help it—so—sleepy," he murmured indistinctly, as he relapsed into unconsciousness.

I went into the next room and had a good cry. I was not half so much frightened at this juncture as disappointed. Here was I, a mere child in years, in a public hotel amongst complete strangers; and my only companion, on whom I relied for protection and amusement, and help and everything, asleep like a log in bed! What a dull, dreadful day lay before me! What was I to do without Hugh? How could I take a walk or my meals, or even interpret what others said, by myself? In my ignorance, I was almost ready to be angry with my poor darling for not making an effort on my behalf, and getting up to look after me. How little I thought that his last effort upon earth had been made! I cannot dwell on this portion of my story; it is too monotonous, and, even at this

distance of time, it is too painful. The doctor came again, and again, and again, perhaps for three or four days, before I was awakened to more than a sense of impatience and inconvenience, and a lurking idea that French doctors were fools, and that an Englishman would have cured his patient in half the time. Which opinion I confided to Hugh, and Hugh smiled at languidly, but did not dispute, and said it was deuced strange that such a rubbishy illness as his should last so long. But about the fourth day, even my inexperienced eyes could see that he was worse. He had been neither asleep nor awake all night, but tossed about restlessly, and talked nonsense, at which I I had sometimes laughed because I thought he was joking, and sometimes cried because I could not understand what he said, and he would not repeat it. I had risen and dressed myself before the doctor called. To my surprise, he was not alone. A lady

accompanied him. She was without bonnet or shawl, and I recognised her as one of the two women who had met me on the stairs some days before (how long ago it seemed!) and laughed at the idea of my being married.

"I have brought a friend, madame," said the doctor.

"Dear Mrs. Power, let me be of use to you if I can," said the stranger, coming forward and taking my hand.

I was too ignorant to know how to accept the offer graciously.

"It is very kind of you," I stammered; "but I do not understand." The eyes I turned towards her were red with weeping; and as she saw them, she kissed me.

"I have come to try and help you," she answered. "Your husband is ill, and you should have a nurse for him. Let me get you a *Sœur de Charité*. The doctor says it is necessary."

"But he will soon be well again now?" I said, with an inquiring glance into her kind face. The look I met there made me hide mine upon her bosom and burst into tears.

"My poor child!" she whispered.

"Oh, don't say he is very ill!" I sobbed. "He has been in bed for four days—surely that is long enough! Why doesn't the doctor let us go away? If we went to the sea, I think Hughie would be all right again."

"He is not well enough to move yet, though we hope he soon will be. Meanwhile he must be nursed, and the nursing is too much for you alone. It is not fit you should undertake it longer. And so we have got a proper nurse for Mr. Power, and she is waiting outside." She called out, "*Entrez, ma sœur!*" as she spoke.

A fair, placid-faced woman, dressed in conventual garments, entered at once, and

after a slight salutation to me, passed into the adjoining room. I felt the hope I had cherished, that this illness of Hughie's might prove to be nothing, die out of me as I watched her solemn transit; at the same time a burden fell off my childish shoulders, to know that I was no longer responsible for the heavy duty I had undertaken.

My new friend, who was seated, drew me down upon her lap—actually upon *her lap*—*I*, a married woman, but a very sorrowful one—and caressed me as though we had known each other all our lives.

“And now, dear, you mustn't think me impertinent, but is not your husband's father Sir Thomas Power, of Gentian's Cross, Dublin?”

“Yes.”

“And have you written to tell him of his son's illness?”

“No—not yet.”



"Then you should do so at once."

"Oh! do you think that he is so *very ill*, then!"

"I think that in any case his father has a right to know that he is not well—and his mother, too. What anxiety she may be suffering from his silence!"

"His mother is angry with us. She has never written to him since our marriage. Because we ran away, you know—though we didn't mean it—and Sir Thomas came to town and saw us married; and Lady Power is angry with him as well as us, Hughie says."

"That makes it all the more necessary you should write to them at once. You will write to-day—won't you, dear?"

"Yes—if you'll tell me what to say," I added ingenuously.

Mrs. Grahame, as my new acquaintance was called, proved a friend indeed to me. She not only told me "what to say" to

Hugh's parents, but stayed with me during the day whenever I was freed from my husband's bedroom.

That evening my dear boy seemed better ; that is, his head was clear ; he was in no pain, and he spoke to me at intervals.

"Katie dear, there is one thing weighs on my mind."

"What is it, Hughie?"

"Not hearing from my mother. I wonder she doesn't write. Do you think she can be angry still?"

"It's a great shame if she is!" I answered stoutly. "Your father is very kind. I wrote to him to-day."

"To tell him I am ill?"

"Yes. Mrs. Grahame said I had better."

He did not express any surprise or make any comment. He took it as a matter of course.

"I am glad you have written. Perhaps she will send me a message now, Katie. I do so wish we had never run away!"

"Oh, Hugh! are you tired of me?" I said, in alarm.

"My darling, no! I love you more than ever I did. I was a silly boy when I took you away from Guildford, Katie. I have been a man ever since you have been left to my protection. But it is that makes me see clearer what is right and what is wrong; and to marry as we did was very, *very* wrong."

"I am so sorry that I went!" I sobbed.

"It wasn't your fault, darling! How should it have been?—a trot like you, six years younger than myself! I should have taught you better. But it is over now, and we wouldn't undo it if we could. We have been very happy, Katie."

"Oh! *so* happy, Hugh! Everything was so jolly till you fell sick."

"And no one was happier than myself. So, you see, dear Katie, it isn't the *thing* I regret, but the way we did it. I know my

father was angry, though he didn't say so. And my mother, too. She has been a good mother, though rather strict, and she was always very proud of me. I am her only son, you know, Katie."

"Yes, dear!"

"And perhaps she thinks I don't care for her any longer, since I was so bent on having my own way. Don't let her think that, Katie. I should be so sorry if she did. And it isn't true."

"Don't bother yourself about it, Hughie. I dare say she will write to you—and, if not, you can write to her."

"You shall write from my dictation. And there is another thing, darling: I must see a priest."

"A priest, Hughie! What for?"

"Oh! for a dozen things. But you don't understand, my poor child! Only I have asked the doctor to send one to me; so don't be surprised when you see him."

“But what do you want to tell him?”

“I want him to pray for me,” said Hugh solemnly.

*To pray for him!* The words fell on my careless ears with little import. If they bore any, it was such as to make me feel glad that Hugh was as anxious to get up again as I was to see him, and to hope—though why I could not have said—that the prayers he was desirous of obtaining might have some miraculous effect in making him do so. “For I know the Roman Catholics can do wonderful miracles,” I said, in my supreme ignorance, to myself.

The priest came that same evening. He was an old silver-haired man of a very calm and benignant expression of countenance. He shut the door when he went in to talk with Hugh, and I remained in the dressing-room outside. As he emerged again, and looked at me compassionately, I caught at his cassock.

"Can you do it?" I exclaimed, in my broken French.

"Do what, my child?" he answered.

"Will he soon be well again?" I said, putting my thought into another form.

"Pray to your Father in heaven, my child! With God all things are possible," he replied as he laid his hand upon my head and left the room.

"*Pray to my Father in heaven!*" I had no more idea of going to God as to a sentient, present Being, able and willing to listen to each word I said, and to read the inmost wishes of my heart, than I had of asking a favour of my earthly father, dead and removed from my sight. God, to me, was Someone over the description of Whom I had wearied heart and brain in the Church Catechism—because of Whom I was compelled to sit through two uninteresting hours in church every Sunday—to Whom I had been taught I should have to render up an

account of every idle word I said; and of Whom, in consequence, knowing the long list of frailties that I was responsible for, I never thought except with an undefined terror.

No! I had much more notion of praying to the priest or the doctor to make Hugh well again. I rose in the morning and went to bed at night without so much as a word of entreaty to any one else!

I do not think I was much surprised, a few days later, when Mrs. Grahame came to tell me that Sir Thomas Power had arrived at the hotel. Sister Angeline had taken my place in so matter-of-fact a manner at the patient's side, the doctor and the priest came and went so regularly, that I had almost grown accustomed to Hugh lying in bed, and ceased to imagine each evening that the next morning would see him on his feet again. But though one thing seemed to have glided into the other

so imperceptibly that I did not perceive much change in myself, Sir Thomas noted it directly.

“My poor little girl,” he said, concernedly, as soon as he had seen his son, “how you must have suffered!”

“Have I, sir?” (I was terribly shy with my father-in-law, more than ever now that Hugh was unable to protect me.) “But I cannot bear that Hughie should be ill and obliged to take such horrid medicine! And I have not been out walking since he has been in bed.”

“That is very wrong. They ought to have sent you out. You might have taken the fever from him.”

“What fever?”

“Have they not told you that my poor boy is suffering from an attack of typhoid fever?”

“Not—*not* the fever the servant di——”  
I paused, unable to complete the sentence.



"Yes," said my father-in-law gravely, "it is the same. He must have taken it when he went to his sister's house.

"But he was only there for a few minutes."

"True; but there is no knowing how these things happen. God's will be done!"

"And he went for *me*—he went for *me*!" I exclaimed with a shrill scream, as I fell forward with my face upon my hands.

Is there any moment when we pass from boys to men, from girls to women? If so, that moment came for me then. Like a flash of lightning, all I had gained rushed on my mind. I saw myself, a child, in possession of a woman's privileges, of a man's love, protection, and devotion!

Like a flash of lightning, too, came, for the first time, the fear, the awful fear, that I might lose it all. I seized my father-in-law's hand and wept over it bitterly. He

drew me to his side, and whispered words of comfort.

"We must *hope*, Katie," he said kindly.

"Oh! there is no hope! He will *never* get well; he will die like the servant. I see it all now. Oh, my boy! Oh, my poor, poor boy! Oh, sir! let me go to him! Let me catch it and die too! How can I stay here without him?"

"Hush, child! hush! You must calm yourself. You must be quiet, or you will disturb him. And as for our lives, Katie, they are in God's hands."

"I do not care, sir! I do not know what you are saying. If Hughie dies I must die too. I must go with him; I will not stay alone!" and breaking from his hold, I rushed through the door, and flung myself, sobbing, on my husband's pillow.

"So they have told you, darling?" he said quietly. "My poor little one! It is very soon to leave you."

"*How* can you talk so calmly? Don't you care to leave me? Oh, my boy! my boy! don't you *care* to stay?"

"I did—two days ago," he answered; "but now, Katie, I'm sure it's for the best. We love each other so, and we have been so short a time together, God *must* have some wise purpose in separating us. Perhaps if we had lived together on earth, we should not have lived together above; and that's the only life worth caring about, Katie."

I could not answer him; I could not cry; the tears had dried up; the wish for inquiry had gone. No one had told me in so many words, but I *knew now* Hugh was dying. These few day's lying in bed—he had been ill, perhaps, for ten days or a fortnight—and which I had never dreamed of but as resulting in a renewal of health and strength, meant that terrible unknown thing—Death!

No! Hugh might tell it me, and I might say I knew it; but I did not know it; I did not believe it; I could not realise that in a short time I and my boyish husband would be separated in this world for ever! He had grown much thinner; his hair was matted and damp, his lips dry, his eyes dark and sunken; but still, there he lay, able to look at me, and speak, and smile. He could not be dying; it was impossible. So my heart said; but in reality I sat down like a crushed thing, dazed and confounded, only seeing the present in a kind of troubled dream, and tremblingly awaiting what was to come. I could not collect my thoughts, the shock had been too great for me. I could not even look back on the past, and read it clearly by the light of the present. All was blurred and indistinct. I did not walk, or speak, or eat, in my proper person. I seemed to be borne along on the resistless tide of events, helpless, aimless, and but

half conscious. Only I remember Mrs. Grahame's burst of tears when she met me that afternoon, and how I cried with her in a stupid kind of way, and was not quite sure if I was very unhappy about it, and felt the same as other people would feel, or whether I was a phenomenon who didn't feel at all, or an idiot who couldn't understand.

That evening some very solemn service was gone through in Hugh's bedroom, at which the priest, and doctor, and Sister Angeline, and Sir Thomas assisted. I was present at the ceremony, though I could not join in it; but my husband would not let go his clasp of me, and I pressed my lips on his hands all the time, and hid my eyes, and did not see what they were doing. But when the room was clear again, and I looked up, I saw Hugh's face laid back upon the pillows, looking very weary, but very calm and peaceful.

"Do you want anything?" I whispered.

"No, darling, I am quite content.—  
Father!"

"My son!"

"My love to mother. Say I was very  
sorry, and I was forgiven."

"She will know it, Hugh."

"And tell her to be a mother to Katie.  
She will, won't she?"

The father's reply was dubious. "I hope  
so. I will be a *father* to her, Hugh!"

"Thanks! I am feeling it so much—  
just now."

"You must not feel it; you must feel  
nothing but peace and happiness after what  
you have experienced. Don't let it trouble  
you, Hugh; all will be right. Trust in  
God."

"I do. I have no anxiety for myself;  
but for her—for her."

"For me, do you mean, darling?" I  
inquired curiously.

Hugh, with a great effort, raised his arms  
and let them fall heavily around me.

“Oh, my love! my love! my love!” he said yearningly. It was all the bitterness of death gathered up in one cry. Our courtship and our marriage, both, had been so much like play, that we had never seemed to have occasion to use strong language towards one another. The vehement words that are wrung from the heart by the knowledge of past loss, or the anticipation of coming evil, had been as yet unnecessary to express the simple, satisfied affection between Hugh and me. But in the moment of our parting, I have often thought since that his eyes were opened to see what lay before me, and his love reached its climax, and he would have given worlds to be able to remain and shield me from it. But I was still earthbound; I heard his anguished cry of warning, but I did not understand.

“Dear, dear boy, don’t look like that!” I said weepingly.

He drew his hand leadenly across his face. There were tears standing in those once strong eyes.

“Do you remember that day, Katie, in the wood behind Aunt Tessie’s cottage, when we found out first we cared for one another? Do you remember the May blossom, and how you laughed at me for loving it? Don’t forget the May, Katie. You will love it now for my sake. And poor Aunt Tessie! we used to laugh at her, too. Give her my love. Don’t let her think I had any unfriendly feeling left.”

“No, no, dear!”

“I will sleep now, darling; but don’t you go away. I shall wake directly if you let go my hand.—Good-night, father.”

“Good-night, Hugh!” replied Sir Thomas, in a trembling voice.

“And won’t you say good-night to me, Hughie?” I said wistfully.

“No, darling! never good-night or good-



bye to you. Here—or *there*—always one—*one !*”

He closed his eyes, and they wanted me to leave him ; but no inducement could make me let go of the hand which Hugh had placed in mine. So I remained for an hour or so, until my eyes, too, closed and my head fell forward on the coverlet. Who lifted me up and conveyed me to another room, I do not know ; but when I woke it was broad daylight, and I was in a strange apartment. I opened my eyes with a start, conscious of surrounding evil. The first object they fell on was the figure of Mrs. Grahame, dressed and seated despondently by the window.

“Mrs. Grahame !” I exclaimed, “why am I here ? Where is Hughie ? Let me go to him !”

“Hush, dear Mrs. Power ! Pray be quiet !” she said earnestly, as she advanced to my side. “You shall go directly, but not just yet.”

"Why not? Is he asleep?"

She nodded her head. Something in the silence of her reply startled me.

"Why cannot I go? Why did they bring me here? Oh, Mrs. Grahame! is he worse?"

"Katie! dear Katie! I must tell you; but try and be strong! You know that he was very ill—that he was dangerously ill—that the doctor did not think he could recover—"

"Yes, yes; but why cannot I go to him?"

"Because—Oh, my God! how am I to tell you? He is *gone*, darling—he is *gone*!"

"*Gone*! Where?"

"To heaven, Katie!"

"*Dead*?" I said; "*dead*?"

"Yes, dear; indeed he is! Oh! it is a terrible grief for you to bear!—so young as you are, too, and so lately married—poor dear child! But it's God's will, Katie!—"

you mustn't forget that ; and we have no right to dispute anything He does ; and—”

“ *Dead !* ” I repeated monotonously ;  
“ *dead !* ”

“ Katie ! don't look like that ! You knew he was dying ; they told you so. It is very awful !—we cannot tell why God should choose to ordain it ; but you know it is what happens every day in this miserable life, and the only thing we wretched mortals can do is to submit.”

“ *Dead !—Hugh ! dead !* ”

Mrs. Grahame became alarmed. She sat down on the bed, and shook me gently.

“ Wake up, Katie ! Don't go on saying that ; you frighten me ! Listen to me ! He *is* dead. He became unconscious very soon after you fell asleep last night, and he never recovered himself. If he had we would have called you. But at three o'clock this morning he died without a struggle—scarcely a sigh. It is a great mercy he felt

no pain, Katie ; and he was quite content to go. Try to think of it in that light, dear, and don't rebel against the will of Heaven."

But I could not think of it in that light.

I turned my face round and buried it in my pillow, and cried as if my heart was broken.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DARKNESS.

I DON'T want to exaggerate my feelings at this crisis, and therefore I will say as little about them as I need. I was but a child; and I have proved by later and more bitter experience that a child cannot feel grief as a woman can. I had not the capacity to comprehend love. I had not the capacity to comprehend death. I had not the capacity to comprehend what the lonely future might hold for me, nor to shrink from the evils it would probably entail. I cried for Hugh as for a beloved playmate, who might never again take my hand and lead me joyously through the flowery paths we had lately trod toge-

ther. I did not weep for him as a woman weeps for the loss of her protector, her counsellor, and her friend, without whom she is but half a creature, and not at all a woman. Of what account did I hold protection and counsel? What I wanted was Hugh's smile and kiss; what I lamented was the blighted prospect of our happy lives at Derry Lodge; what I was scared at was the silence, the uncertainty, the darkness that followed my boy husband's death.

It was utterly dark to me. I could as little comprehend why I should be bereft of my lifelong companion, as why the world went round, or day succeeded night. I only felt that it was incomprehensible, and that I was left *alone*.

I did not realise even that until after the funeral was over, and they had taken away my gallant young lover in that long, long coffin beside which I had spent so many days, and hidden him from my sight.

Then my violent grief, which had expended itself beside Hugh's corpse, turned to a dangerous apathy.

I cannot remember myself what I did during the time that he remained with us; but they told me afterwards that I sat, day and night, by the side of his body, talking to it, crying over it, and entreating it to speak to me again.

I dare say I must have presented a very pitiful little spectacle—a widow of fifteen, weeping over my husband's bier—and drawn many a tear from eyes that would not have found one to spare for me in later years, when my woman's heart was pierced through and through as with a two-edged sword. Women who for the most part bring their troubles on themselves—or at least are old enough to have foreseen and prevented them—are generally left to draw on their self-pity for consolation. A sentimental grief is far oftener sympathised with than

a practical one : for the sentiment appeals to ourselves, and we weep as much for what we might have been, as for what others are. Not but that my grief for Hugh was genuine. I dearly loved and admired my young husband. I love his memory to this day; and often think how bright, had he been spared, my life had been. But mingled with my personal sorrow was a very present sense of disappointment. With Hugh I had lost position and protection. I did not feel any more like a married woman; I had returned to the smallness of Katie Arundel. I was not quite sure whether I should not have to take back my former name, and resume short frocks and black alpaca aprons.

And this fearful idea was heightened on the sad evening after my Hugh's funeral, when I was sitting, tearless and sullen, in my own room, and my father-in-law came in to speak to me. Mrs. Grahame had stuck a widow's cap on my poor little head, but it



looked too ridiculous. I almost laughed myself when I saw it in the glass; and when I pulled it off, and all my hair down with it, I think my friends decided that natural veil was a fitter one for me than white crape.

"Katie," said Sir Thomas gently, "would you not like to go home?"

"*Home?*" I echoed vaguely; "where is home?"

"I have been thinking much on this subject," returned my father-in-law, "and the conclusion I have arrived at is, that you could not do better—at all events, for the present—than go to your aunt, Miss Arundel."

"Back to Aunt Tessie!" I exclaimed, in real alarm. "Oh! I could not! I could not!"

"But, my dear—"

"She was so unkind to me," I went on, hurriedly; "and she would be so cross! And I didn't mind when Hughie was here; but now!—now—"

“My dear girl, you do not seem to remember that your position is altogether altered. You have always taken, I imagine, a rather exaggerated view of Miss Arundel’s strictness; but were it all you fear, she would hardly dare to exercise it in your behalf now. You are a married woman, and will have your separate allowance. My poor son’s income was not very large at present, although”—with a deep sigh—“he would have come into a fine fortune by-and-by; but it will be ample for all your wants; and though he has died intestate, I am sure that neither Lady Power nor myself would ever dream of disputing your right to what he leaves behind him.”

All this was Greek to me, except the one proposition, that I should return to Aunt Tessie’s care. The prospect seemed to double my grief.

“I cannot go back to Guildford!” I sobbed. “I would ever so much rather go back with you.”

Sir Thomas looked uncomfortable.

"I wish I *could* take you back with me, my child. As my poor son's widow, you have a strong claim on me ; but there are circumstances. Your marriage was not quite regular, you know, my dear ; and Lady Power's affection for Hugh was so great, I fear it may take a little time to overcome her prejudices regarding it. Only a little time, perhaps, and then I hope you will come and see us all, and make great friends with the mother and sisters of our poor boy. Meanwhile," continued my father-in-law, finding I made no reply, "as you are far too young to live by yourself, I do not think you could do better than accept your aunt's invitation to Guildford."

"Her invitation !"

"Yes. I have written to her more than once lately, and this morning I received this letter from her in reply. After alluding to the sad circumstances of the last week, she

says, "I am quite ready to receive my niece, Mrs. Hugh Power, if she should think fit to return for awhile to Ivy Cottage, which place, indeed, had I had my will, she should never have left; and I have no doubt we shall make arrangements on meeting which will prove mutually satisfactory. Pray give Katharine my love, and offer her my condolences on this mournful occasion. How truly do the occurrences of each day convince us of the truth of the words of the Psalmist, 'All flesh is grass!' I trust that late events may be blessed to the souls of my niece, yourself, and all your family—' I need read you no more," said Sir Thomas, folding up the letter (I don't think he liked the allusion to his soul any more than I did); "but my advice decidedly is, that you go to Miss Arundel."

"I don't care where I go," I said dejectedly.

So it was arranged for me that, until I

was old enough, or had had time enough to look around me and decide what course of action would most conduce to my own comfort, I should return to Aunt Tessie. It was a glorious day in July when Sir Thomas took me to her house. I had parted stolidly with my kind friend Mrs. Grahame, and had been unable to shed a tear even on Hugh's last resting-place, so utterly forlorn, desolate, and rebellious did I feel. It is not to be wondered at, then, that I walked up the garden-path and into the little old familiar sitting-room of Ivy Cottage in a condition which was simply apathetic. I felt like a child that has been dancing with her companions in the broad sunshine and amongst the flowers all day, and suddenly finds herself plunged into cold and darkness, without one hand to guide or stay her. I was purely *in despair*.

Aunt Tessie, dressed in black, came to receive us. I did not even remark the dif-

ference in her mode of addressing me as I sank down silently upon the rickety little sofa she had so often warned me not to ruin by sitting on. Sir Thomas Power and she talked for some time together at the window in a kind of burring, buzzing way, and then the former rose to go, and advanced to bid me farewell.

“Keep up your spirits, my dear!” he said, in parting. “You are very young, and your life is all before you. There are brighter days, please God, in store; meanwhile, try and place your trust in Him. Remember how Hugh trusted. It was his great comfort at the last. I wish you thought more of such things, my dear. It is our only consolation in a time like this. May God bless and keep you! I shall expect to hear often how you are getting on.”

He kissed me gravely on the forehead and left the room. When he was gone, the last link I held to Hugh seemed to be dis-

united. Excepting that I wore a black dress and a wedding-ring, possessed five hundred pounds a year, and was called "Mrs. Power" (all of which things I held at that moment of no account), in what was I altered for the better from Kate Arundel, who had thought it such a grand thing to run away from Ivy Cottage and get rid of Aunt Tessie's lectures, and tiresome Miss Drayton's lessons—and be a married woman ! And now I was not quite sure whether Miss Drayton and the German grammar would not reappear with the morning light, or Aunt Tessie inform me it was nine o'clock, and order me at once to bed. And there would be no dear, gallant Hugh this time to come to the rescue, and turn my terror to delight. Oh, Hugh ! Hugh ! was it possible I had left him lying, all by himself beneath the earth, in Père la Chaise ?

How cruel—how cold-hearted I had been ! I felt as if I could have jumped up from my

seat and rushed back to Paris, only to sit by that lonely grave and assure its occupant that he should never be forgotten! The narrow walls and low ceilings of Ivy Cottage seemed to close round and stifle me! I wanted air—I wanted space, in which to call on my dead husband to come back to me. Overcome by feeling and choking with emotion, I rose to rush into the garden and recover myself, and fell in a dead faint over the threshold instead. So Aunt Tessie found me when she came back from seeing Sir Thomas safely to the fly which had brought us from the station.

So, she and her maids together lifted me into my lonely bed; which I did not leave for three long weeks after.



## CHAPTER IX.

### A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

I WAS not ill ; so far as I can remember, no signs of physical weakness attacked me ; but I lay in bed like a deaf and dumb creature, too unwilling, too inert, too utterly crushed to move. The shock had completely stunned me. I was rendered actually incapable of taking any part in the affairs of daily life. When I had lain so for the better part of a fortnight, Aunt Tessie became alarmed. I was no longer in the position of a child, to be shaken, and pulled out of bed, and set on my feet, and ordered to eat my breakfast ; and an invalid guest was not only

annoying to her, but threatened to become a nuisance. So she trotted off to Dr. Carlisle, who had known me from a baby, and carried me safely through the measles and whooping-cough and other childish ailments, and brought him to my bedside; but I turned my face to the wall, and hid my eyes, and would not even look at him.

“Will you be good enough to leave Miss Katie and me alone, Miss Arundel?” he said, in the old familiar manner. “I think I shall be better able to judge of her condition when I have had a few minutes’ private conversation with her.”

Aunt Tessie did not like being turned out of the room—I could *feel* that, though I didn’t see her; but I heard her walk to the door with a rapid step and close it sharply. Then I prepared myself for a lecture, but none came. I might have remembered what a good friend Dr. Car-

lisle had ever been to me—how many packets of sugar-plums he had surreptitiously given me—how many rosy apples and purple and golden plums. I waited—a little sulkily, I am afraid—for his opening words in vain. The first movement he made towards me was to place his hand gently upon my pulse.

“I am not ill,” I said, jerking it away.

“My poor child!” was all he answered. At the sympathetic tones my breast commenced to heave.

Aunt Tessie had not said one unkind word to me since I had entered the house; on the contrary, she had gone out of her way to attend upon my wants; but she had never pitied me nor alluded to the cause of my grief. She seemed to be afraid of doing so—as though it were too horrible a subject to be mentioned—a ghost to be laid and put away and forgotten as soon as possible. And all the time I was brooding—not on

Hugh in heaven, but on Hugh, dead, stark, and stiff, with closed eyes and mouldering features, buried six feet below the ground, with heavy clods of clay weighing down his boyish breast.

"Oh, I wish I were dead!" I exclaimed, as the old doctor's words brought the welcome tears into my eyes, and I turned and wept upon my pillow.

"I know you do, Katie. I know that life appears completely empty and void to you at present. That you wonder why God ever let you be born—why He ever let you meet your husband—why He can be so cruel as to sit up in heaven and never listen to what His children say, nor see what they are doing, nor care if they are miserable or happy."

"Who told you so?" I inquired, in astonishment at his having read my thoughts so well.

"My own experience, Katie—my own

life. You think, poor child ! that no one ever suffered as you are suffering now—that no one ever experienced so bitter a loss—that no one's hopes were ever cut short so cruelly and quickly as yours have been. That is natural, and I do not wish to depreciate your trouble. God knows it is heavy enough for such young shoulders to bear ; but others have borne it before you, my dear."

"He was so good—so bright—so happy," I sobbed. "I can never forget—*never!*"

"No one wishes you to do so, Katie. It would be ungrateful in the extreme if you were to."

"But Aunt Tessie says I ought to get up and exert myself. And what is there to get up for?"

"Well, Miss Arundel has handed you over to me, you see. I am your doctor now, and I say you may lie in bed as long as you like."

"I shall never get up again, then. I shall stay here till I die."

Dr. Carlisle did not dispute the point. He only felt my pulse again, and asked to look at my tongue.

"You are not going to send me any medicine!" I exclaimed in alarm.

"No, indeed. You do not require any. But I shall send you some books, Katie."

"I don't care to read."

"Is there any one you would like to see?"

"No one, except—"

"Except who?"

"Jane," I answered tearfully. "She was so kind to us, poor thing! And Aunt Tessie sent her away for it. But I am sure, if she is anywhere near, she would be very—very—sorry for me—*now*."

"I will inquire for her at once," said

Dr. Carlisle, rising. "I think you ought to have a maid to attend on you; and Jane was a good girl, and would do admirably. I will speak to your aunt on the subject as I go downstairs."

And so the dear old man left me, not altogether pleased at the idea of being encouraged to lie in bed, and quite unconscious that he had adopted that plan as the best means of making me long to leave it. It was not many days before Jane arrived, and the meeting between us—on my side, at least—was an affecting one. The sight of her round, honest face brought back so vividly the night I climbed down the apple-tree to run off to London with my Hugh.

"Oh, Jane! Jane!" I cried, as I threw myself impulsively into her arms. The girl looked frightened, and as though she were doing something wrong. She could not reconcile the little "Miss Katie" she

had helped to an elopement with the widowed mistress she was now called upon to attend.

“Lor, ma’am! pray don’t,” she commenced. “Whatever would Miss Harundel think? She would say ’twas a horful liberty on my part. And now as you’re Mrs. Power, too!”

“Oh! don’t call me ma’am, nor Mrs. Power, Jane. I cannot bear it.”

“Lor, miss—ma’am, I mean. And whatever am I to call you, then?”

“Call me ‘Miss Katie,’ as you used to do. The other name reminds me so of—of *him*!” I added faintly.

“Oh, lor! my poor, poor dear!” cried Jane unaffectedly, as the tears rushed into her eyes; and she caught me to her honest bosom and hugged me as if she had been my mother. Her presence, and rough outspoken sympathy, did me more good than anything. It was not long before she had



coaxed me out of bed; and, in a few days more, when Dr. Carlisle called, he found me sitting in a chair, under the old apple-tree, staring vacantly at the summer insects that flitted through the blades of grass at my feet. He did not congratulate me upon the change. He only advised me, should I feel tired, to go back to bed.

"I hate bed," I said impetuously. "I'm sick to death of it. I feel as if I could never go there again, even to sleep."

"Very good. Sleep where you are, then."

"What! in the garden! I should catch my death of cold, Doctor."

"I dare say you would. Only please yourself, and you'll please me. Have you read the book I sent you?"

"A little of it."

"And you don't care for it?"

"Not much."

"Have you got any needlework to do?"

I shook my head. There was a pair of

slippers I had commenced to embroider in Paris, lying in one of my boxes upstairs. The very thought of needlework brought a lump into my throat.

"And do you mean to sit all your life long with your hands folded before you like this, Katie?"

"Perhaps it won't be long, Doctor."

"I think it will, child. I think it will last long enough for you to thank God He did not take it away now."

"I don't believe that."

"I am *sure* of it."

"What do you mean?" I said quickly.

"Just what I say. You do not credit me now, but before a year is over your head you will understand why God keeps you in health and strength when you want to die, and you will say it has been for the best. We all come to acknowledge that, sooner or later."

His words were Greek to me. I could

was so seldom that I cried. Jane was quite alarmed at an exhibition of tearless grief in one so young.

"I wish you'd cry oftener, my dear," she used to say as we sat in the wood together, I generally sitting in her lap; "it isn't natural you should go on like this, day after day. It'll do you harm, Miss Katie, if you don't take care. Come, dear! tell me all about poor Master Hugh, and how quiet he died like, and see if you can't make the tears come down a bit; for it frightens me to death to see you go on like this."

But I could not weep as I should have wept, even when she enlarged on the beauty and perfections of my lost darling. I could not stretch out my arms any more, and implore him to return, as I had done when kneeling beside his corpse. I could not realise that he lived anywhere. To me he was dead, dead! And I was a forlorn

creature who longed to die too, if only to lose recollection, but for whom nobody cared enough to bestow the gift of death upon. My continued depression began to act upon my body; I felt really ill. It was now the month of September. The summer had been long and oppressive, and the languor of the season seemed to have communicated itself to my limbs. I became heavy and inert; my appetite failed, and other symptoms warned me I was not in my usual health. Aunt Tessie and Dr. Carlisle had one or two lengthy conversations, shut up in the drawing-room together; and I perceived that the former had begun to watch me at odd moments when she thought I was not observing her, and to treat me with a deference and consideration I had never met with at her hands before. The change secretly flattered me. I believed it to be due to my failing health, and that Dr. Carlisle had at last been obliged to

confess that I was on the road to follow Hugh. I pictured to myself the gradual steps by which I should descend to the tomb, and the interesting manner in which I should fade away from this world, and be laid out, like a pale martyr, with my hands crossed upon my breast, and be quoted for ever thereafter as a model of constancy and love. My grief was not the less real because I indulged in these absurd phantasies; but my imagination was becoming rapidly morbid and diseased, from the unnatural strain laid on it, so that I was incapable of distinguishing between false sentiment and true. But the Comforter was on His way to me.

It was on a certain day in October that I fainted. I had been out walking by myself (for Jane was occupied on some work for me indoors), and feeling much the same as usual, when I suddenly became conscious that I was lying on the grass-plot, and some-

body was dashing cold water in my face, and making me very wet and uncomfortable.

"Don't do that!" I said fractionally, as I feebly fought with the officious though well-meaning hand.

"She's a-coming to now, ma'am," cried Jane's voice; and then I opened my eyes and saw where I lay, and that Aunt Tessie had just got another tumbler of water ready to throw at me.

"Let me get up!" I exclaimed, struggling to my feet.

They supported me to the drawing-room sofa, for I was very weak and giddy, and pulled down the green blinds, and sent for Dr. Carlisle, who presently appeared and took a chair beside me with a most important and professional air. I felt too ill to squabble with him, so for once I let him feel my pulse without remonstrance. We were quite alone.

"Well," said the Doctor, after a little

while, "and so you've been taking too long a walk."

"I only went to the wood."

"Did you feel ill before this came on?"

"Not worse than usual."

"You must be more careful in future."

"But I don't want to get well. Dear Doctor, do tell me the truth! *Am I not dying?*"

The chuckle with which the Doctor received my earnest question rather offended me.

"My dear child, what nonsense! You are no more dying than I am, and not half so much."

"But I want to die. Oh, I *do* want to die so *very, very much!*" I said in a voice of despair.

Dr. Carlisle grew grave directly.

"Katie," he said presently, "I have wanted to speak to you for some time, and this gives me an excellent opportunity of

doing so. I have something to tell you that, if I am not very much mistaken, will make you want to live instead of die."

"*Make me want to live?*" I repeated incredulously.

"Just so, because you have something to live for. Do you know why you feel ill?"

"No, I don't know, and I don't care," I answered indifferently.

"My dear, if your greatest wish could be granted you now, what would it be?"

I writhed at the question. It seemed so cruel of him to put it.

"Oh, Doctor! why do you ask me? You must know."

"But I wish to hear it, Katie."

"Hugh! Hugh!" I moaned, as I buried my face in the sofa-cushion. "Oh! if I could but see Hugh again!"

"Well, Katie, you know that whilst you are in this world that is impossible. God



has seen fit to call Hugh home to Himself. But if Hugh, from that home, could send you a messenger to say he loved you still—a messenger to assure you of God's care for and interest in you—a messenger to comfort and console you for your loss—to give you new happiness, new hope——”

The dear old man's voice faltered, and he drew his hand across his eyes. I lifted mine from their shelter, and stared at him wonderingly.

“But how?” I exclaimed. “How?”

“Some one is coming to you, Katie, by-and-by, to remind you of Hugh; some one to whom you can talk of Hugh; some one whom you must try to bring up to meet Hugh with you in heaven.”

“*Some one!*” I repeated vaguely, without an inkling of the truth. I think Dr. Carlisle found my innocence a stumbling-block to his eloquence, from the roundabout way in which he went to deliver his news.

"Yes. Don't you think you must have been a great comfort to your mother when you were born, Katie?"

"I don't know. No one ever told me; and papa and mamma died so soon afterwards, I can't even remember them."

"But, supposing your father only had died, and your mother had come home to England with you, cannot you imagine how fond she would have been of you, and what a pleasure and comfort you would have been to her; how you would have consoled her for the loss of her husband?"

"Perhaps so; but she died with him, you see, and left me alone. I seem to have been alone all my life, Dr. Carlisle, till—till—Hugh came—and now——"

"Now God designs you to be alone no longer, Katie. He is going to send you a great comforter; He is going to send you a baby."

*"A baby!"*

At first I said no more than that. The room seemed to swim round with me. The very idea made me gasp with surprise.

"Yes, my dear, it is really true. You are going to have a baby, all for your own, Katie, to love and comfort you—a little baby to remind you of Hugh."

"Me!—*me*! Oh, no, Doctor! it's a mistake! You don't know anything about it. It *can't* be true! It's only the hot weather; I shall be well again when the winter comes. Besides—besides——"

I was choking with the emotion his intelligence had called up in me.

"Katie! trust me! I would not deceive you! If you will be good and patient, all will come to pass as I say. But you must take care of your health, now, my dear; not for yourself, but for the sake of your child."

The words seemed to transform me. I sat up on the sofa and looked straight be-

fore me, with my childish hands pressed against my forehead, as if that would help me to comprehend the mighty fact. *My child!* a child of my own—my very, *very* own—for me to nurse, and love, and look after, and carry out for a walk. A baby in long clothes, like those mysterious and beautiful little darlings in white cashmere cloaks and satin hoods I had sometimes stopped to look at in the street, and gazed at reverently, as at something the existence of which I could not comprehend. A fat, chubby baby, in a straw hat and a perambulator, that I could wheel into the fields, to fill its hands with buttercups and daisies, and guide its toddling feet across the grass! A little boy in knickerbockers and jacket, with a smiling face and curly hair! A young man, taller than myself, a second Hugh, to whom I might cling, and confide all I had suffered, with impunity. All these wonderful phases of my coming honours

flashed through my mind like lightning and made me glow with the greatest pride a woman ever feels. But only for a moment; one thought of Hugh made all the bright pictures of the future melt into darkness, and left a forlorn and inexperienced girl alone with her great sorrow, and half terrified at the prospect which had suddenly opened before her.

“Oh! if Hugh were only with me!”  
I sobbed as I flung myself again upon the sofa.

## CHAPTER X.

### MY OWN CHILD !

As soon as my mind had become accustomed to the wonderful idea that had been presented to it, I began to derive no small consolation from the increase of importance which the fact of my coming honours gave me in that little household. It is true that my new-blown dignity received a slight check on finding that everybody had been told the secret before myself; but that fact could not, after all, really detract from my superiority to the rest of the inmates of Ivy Cottage. Indeed, I may say that I felt myself to be raised by my new position, not only above Aunt Tessie and the servants,

but almost every one in Guildford. I took to extending my walks into the village and along the high-road, that I might see all the old maids (amongst whom the intelligence had run like wildfire) rush to their windows to watch me as I passed, and have old Mrs. Dean (who, though she was married for the second time, had never had a family) trot down to meet me at her garden gate, and press me to walk into the Rectory and seat myself, and have a glass of wine. Yes, I am fain to confess these trifles pleased me, as did the solicitude with which Aunt Tessie placed a cushion behind my back, or Jane thrust a stool beneath my feet; and I think, even had I been much older than fifteen years and a half, I should have found comfort in them still. They lifted me from the forlorn and insignificant condition in which Hugh's death had left me, to a position of importance and responsibility, and for the first time I began to feel a little

comforted at my loss. As soon, I suppose, as Aunt Tessie could make up her original mind to broach a subject of such questionable delicacy, she acquainted Sir Thomas and Lady Power of the prospect before me; for about Christmas time, to my great surprise, I received a letter from my mother-in-law, congratulating me on the approaching event, and rather demanding than asking me to journey as soon as possible to Ireland, that my child might be born where its father had been, at Gentian's Cross.

This was the first communication of any kind that had passed between Lady Power and myself. I had loved her son, and married him, and mourned him, and not a word of sympathy, or kindness, or consolation had his mother vouchsafed to me throughout my trouble or my joy. Aunt Tessie, who anticipated the prospect of a nursery in Ivy Cottage with anything but satisfaction, thought I was foolish and



impolitic to disregard the invitation extended to me; but I was spirited, though I was young, and I tore the letter which contained it into pieces.

"I *won't* go to her," I exclaimed indignantly. "She let my poor darling die without a word to say she had forgiven him. I don't care how she behaves to me, but I can't forget her behaviour to him. And he was so good about it, too—he spoke so kindly of her to the very last. Why, I should die at Gentian's Cross. The very thought of her makes me mad!"

"My dear Katharine, why speak so unguardedly?" replied Aunt Tessie, who did not consider that marriage or misery had improved me much in this respect. "Of course you are at liberty to do as you like in the matter; but I should have considered the advantages of becoming friendly with your late husband's family to be considerable. In the first place, they

are very affluent, and may prove of great benefit to you in the future: and in the second, if they extend their protection to—to—” Here Aunt Tessie, at a loss for a word which should express her meaning without violating her modesty, coughed and hesitated.

“To my baby,” I interposed bluntly.

“Well, my dear, that is what I *did* mean; though, I suppose, it is hardly the custom to speak of—at least I have seldom heard a lady express herself so openly on the subject as you do. Still—”

“Oh! I know what you would say, Aunt Tessie—that if I go to Gentian’s Cross to be confined, the Powers may take a fancy to my child, and leave it something in their will.”

“Katharine, pray do not speak so loud. The door is open.”

“I don’t care if it is. I won’t go to Ireland. I don’t want their horrid money.

Hugh's gone, and I've got nothing left, and—*they shan't have my baby!*” I exclaimed, with a face red with indignation.

“My dear, you have only to say so—though I confess I think it's a great pity. These rooms are very small; and there is no doubt you would have every comfort under Lady Power's roof. From all I hear, Gentian's Cross must be a fine place. And their only son, too! It's very natural they should wish it. No one knows a mother's feelings.”

“Then why didn't she show them when they would have done some good? Why didn't she send Hugh a word of comfort when he was dying? What do I want with her feelings now? They can't bring *him* back—and she may keep them to herself. I *won't* go to Gentian's Cross!”

And so I returned not a particularly grateful letter, I imagine, though, at this

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distance of time, I cannot remember how it was worded, and hoped, as I posted it, that I should never again hear from Lady Power. But I was mistaken. In a few weeks arrived an answer, expressing her disappointment at my determination, but accompanied by a box of the most beautiful baby-linen that I had ever seen. My heart would have been harder than it was if it had not melted under this peace-offering laid at the shrine of Hugh's baby. I turned over the delicate little shirts, and bed-gowns, and petticoats, all trimmed with the costliest lace—the fine flannels, embroidered by hand—the rich robes and caps, the white cloak and hood, the tiny socks—and could not help feeling that some great expectations must be cherished of the infant for which such an expensive wardrobe had been provided. My heart beat faster and my eyes filled as I thought how soon I should be dressing *my*

*own child* in these fairy garments, and I lifted the little things as reverently to my lips as though they had already touched that mysterious being of whom I thought by night and day. I could not but answer Lady Power's second epistle in a kinder strain, whilst I thanked her for her remembrance of me. But there was one sentence in her letter which I did not comment on, because I could not understand it. She wrote: "There are two articles you will not find amongst the *layette*, the christening robe and cap. Those I must, *of course*, reserve until we meet." Why "*of course*"? Her words intimated that, if my baby was not to be born at Gentian's Cross, they would at least like to see it christened there. That was only natural; but why "*of course*"? If I preferred that Mr. Dean should baptize it in the parish church of Guildford, what was there to prevent me? However, I did not worry myself about

the question, but passed it over; for, as is customary with young mothers, I oftener feared that I should die in my coming trial than live to see my child grow up and flourish. Any happiness I might experience in the prospect of it only came by fits and starts. It seemed too terrible an ordeal to survive, and my fear was at times overwhelming. I brooded over it day after day, till my depression was almost habitual, and, haunting me even in sleep, would cause me to start up three or four times a night, shrieking for help, and trembling from head to foot with a horror which I could only feel and not interpret. Had I had any one on whom to lean in this extremity, I should have borne myself, perhaps, with greater dignity and trust; but more than ever did I now feel myself to be alone. Had Hugh's dear, joyous voice been able to whisper assurance to me, however ignorantly, I should have believed and rested on

his word. Had I possessed a mother to take me in her arms, and tell me that the joy of the possession of myself had outweighed all her pain, I might have taken heart from her example, and learned to put my confidence in Heaven; but I had no one to speak to on the subject but such as were even less wise than myself. Aunt Tessie considered it excessively improper that any one should allude to such a thing as a baby until it had been dressed in Christian attire and laid in a bassinette; and Jane, with the horror of the uneducated of physical pain,\* and the wonderful capacity they have for dilating on the terrors of a situation, so augmented my vague fears whenever I mentioned the matter to her, that my own sense, small as it was, pointed out the advisability of keeping my thoughts to myself. So I dragged out the weary days alone, and spring drew nearer and nearer; and if I ever prayed, it

was—not for protection and safety, and a happy future with my child—but that I might die before it ever saw the light. I *was* so frightened !

\* \* \* \* \*

It was the dawn of one of the earliest days of March when I lay in my bed so weak and exhausted that I felt as if I were sinking through the mattresses and the floor, right, right away into infinity. Everything about me seemed as though I were in a dream. The voices of the persons who moved about my room sounded far off, as if heard through a fog ; and yet I could distinguish each word they said, and watch, in a kind of indistinct and hazy manner, the grey dawn that struggled through the white window-blinds and fought with the sickly light of the candle which Dr. Carlisle seemed to be carrying all over the room in the most aimless way. I could trace the unusual disorder of the



apartment, and I could see that the faces which had been so anxiously peering into mine for the last twelve hours had settled down into something like their normal expression again. I knew, too, that my trial was over, and that I had passed through the gates of Hell into the calm of Heaven; but I was too languid to think of anything else. I felt as if my weakened senses were gradually fading away into unconsciousness; and all I desired was to be allowed so to fade away, and never be troubled with pain or pleasure or any emotion more. Even a loud and energetic squall from the other end of the room did not arouse me.

“A fine child,” said the doctor.

“Very fine, sir,” responded the nurse—who had been torturing me for twenty-four hours past with wise saws, questionable jokes, and worrying attentions, until I had begun to regard her as an emissary of the Fiend him-

self—"I don't know as ever I see a finer. She's a regular beauty, she is; and such lungs, too!"

These words, accompanied by another prolonged squall, made me feel a little curious. Some of the few pleasant anticipations I had ventured to indulge in flickered back upon my memory.

"Doctor!" I said faintly.

"Hush, my dear! You mustn't talk," was the immediate answer, as Dr. Carlisle came up to my bedside, and felt my pulse. "So—so! We are getting on. But you must lie still, like a good girl, and go to sleep."

"But my baby—"

"Oh, the baby's all right! A nice healthy little girl! Now you know everything's well over, and so you must just shut your eyes, and think of nothing but having a good rest."

But the squalling was still going on (I

believe they had put the baby on the top of the chest-of-drawers, to keep it out of the way), and something quite new, and that I had never experienced before, began to spring up in me at the sound, and make my heart palpitate with eager joy.

“ Doctor, I *will* go to sleep ; but I must see my baby ! ”

“ Afterwards, my dear, afterwards ; you are not strong enough yet. Trust me, everything is right, and you shall have it as soon as you have rested a little.”

“ I cannot rest till I have seen it. Oh, Doctor ! Nurse ! *do give* me my baby ! ”

My agitation was rising. The nurse glanced at the doctor, and the doctor nodded at the nurse, and in another moment a bundle of flannel was laid on my left arm, and I trembled with eagerness as I pulled it open. A fat, pulpy, red face met my view, with a nose that seemed to be spread half over it, two weak, swollen eyes feebly blink-

ing at the light, and a mouth that was slit from ear to ear ; in fact, the orthodox new-born baby.

But I don't think I saw what she was like. I was experiencing that marvellous thrill that comes over a woman when the child of the man she loves is first placed in her arms ; and in the unconscious little creature beside me I saw only Hugh's representative. Hugh in his strength and beauty—Hugh in his impudence and boldness—Hugh in his love for and protection of me—Hugh on his death-bed ! Oh ! I had never missed Hugh before as I missed him when I first held his baby in my arms ! Where was he to rejoice over this wonderful thing with me ?—to be thankful for my safety—to assure me he would love it for my sake and his own ? Where was the father of my child ? I only felt *half a mother* without him. The first word I uttered, as I looked at my little daughter's features, was his name. The first welcome

I gave her were the tears that welled up weakly into my eyes at the remembrance that he could never see her.

"Hugh!" I exclaimed brokenly, as I squeezed the little bundle to my bosom and turned my face round upon the pillow.

"Come! come! this will never do!" said the Doctor, as he hurriedly mixed some horrid decoction in a glass. "Here, my dear, drink this; and, nurse, take the child into another room until Mrs. Power has had a sleep."

"No, no!" I said imploringly. "I will drink whatever you like, Doctor; but pray don't take my baby from me!"

"Will you promise not to talk any more, then, or even to think?"

"I will promise anything if you will leave my baby here."

So, fearing the effect of opposition, I suppose, they did as I desired them, and, with my lips pressed upon the face of my infant,

who, with the instinct of young animals, seemed to understand I was her mother, and to be quite contented to lie where she was, I sunk off into a sleep as placid as her own.

It was very curious to watch Aunt Tessie on her first visit of inspection to my room. It was on the evening of the same day, and I had waked up from sleep much refreshed, and eager to show off my new treasure to the household. My little girl, whom I had scarcely let out of my arms, except for the briefest interval, since the moment of her birth, was awake and quiet, and in the best possible condition for being exhibited; and Aunt Tessie, having been duly informed that I was ready to receive her, entered the room on tiptoe, and advanced to the bedside as though she were prepared to see me laid out for burial. Poor old lady! her face was very pale and scared-looking; and I have often thought since that perhaps she suffered more during those long hours

of suspense than I had given her credit for. The smiling face I turned to greet her with must have somewhat surprised her.

“Look, Aunt Tessie!” I exclaimed eagerly, “isn’t she a beauty? Her eyes are quite grey by daylight; I’m sure they will be like *his*. And isn’t she big? Nurse says she must weigh quite twelve pounds; but she won’t weigh her because it’s unlucky. And she has such dear little feet!”

Aunt Tessie gazed at the baby without speaking. Did any regret for her barren life flash through her at that moment? If it did, I was too selfishly excited to heed it.

“I’m so glad it’s a girl, Aunt Tessie; it’s so much nicer than a boy, except for the name. I did want to call it after him, my poor darling. But I shall always think of Hugh when I look at her, whatever she may be named. She shan’t be ‘Katharine’; I hate my own name, though it was poor mamma’s.”

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"My dear, are you not talking too much?" said Aunt Tessie solemnly.

"A great deal too much, ma'am, as I've said a dozen times to-day, if I've said it once," interrupted the nurse; "and Mrs. Power will be making herself quite ill if she don't attend to what the doctor tells her."

"Oh, nonsense, nurse! I am too happy to lie here and say nothing. I should burst if you didn't let me talk just a little; and about my own child, too! Aunt Tessie, what do you think of her?"

"I think you have cause to be very grateful, my dear. But I can hardly believe it even now; and you won't be sixteen till next month! Dear, dear! it seems almost incredible!"

"But it is true, nevertheless," I replied, with glee. "It is my own, own baby! Oh! how I love it."

I kissed the little creature's face all over



as I spoke, and I think poor Aunt Tessie sighed.

"I suppose I ought to write to Lady Power to-night, and let her know the news. I have not been in the habit of corresponding with her ladyship; but she must be the most proper person to hear of such an event."

"Oh, yes, do, Aunt Tessie! and tell her the things all fit beautifully, and that baby is the most lovely little thing that ever was born, and that her eyes are grey, and she is very fat, and nurse says her hair will curl when she gets older."

"Yes, ma'am; and if you'll be saying good evening to Mrs. Power now, I'll make her comfortable for the night," said the nurse, with a look of meaning at Aunt Tessie, who rose to leave me.

"Aunt Tessie," I whispered shyly, as she bent over me, "I'm afraid I've not been so grateful for everything as I ought to have

been. Will you ask God to forgive me? Will you say I am sorry, and now I've got baby I do mean to try to be better?"

"My dear, why don't you say it yourself? Not but that I shall return thanks for your preservation, Katharine—and have already done so. But surely you are not too weak to say your prayers? There is no need of a set form, you know, my dear; the fewest words often mean the most. And you must not forget that your child and you have a Father in heaven."

The words sank to the bottom of my godless little breast like a stone. How often during the past months—how often during all the years of my life—had I remembered that I had a Father in heaven? Had I ever thanked Him for my joy? Had I ever cried to Him in my sorrow? Hugh had thought of Him at the last, and wished he had served him better; but even Hugh's death had not induced me to seek comfort

at the hands of the God who had taken him away. And now He had sent me this little child to love and comfort me; and if I did not remember to thank Him for His goodness, might He not take her from me also? I trembled at the awful thought! I thought of the times when Hugh had spoken to me of religion (for it had often been his favourite theme when we were quiet and alone), and how he had urged me to place more faith in our heavenly Father, and to cling to the offices of the Church and the practice of prayer as my best safeguard against all the trials and temptations of the world. And I had listened, because it was Hugh that spoke to me, and gone away and forgotten all about it, and lived alone in my misery, as if there were no God in heaven to pity my sufferings or to relieve them. But now the remembrance of my darling's dying faith in this unseen Father came back to my mind, and my baby seemed to be,

indeed, what Dr. Carlisle had called her, a messenger from heaven and him. I felt now that I *must* pray that God would protect my little child, and let her grow up to comfort me ; and the first real prayer I had ever uttered came forth from my lips. "O God! be a father to my poor fatherless baby and keep her safely, and don't let her ever miss dear Hugh. And if my darling is with You, tell him I'm safe, and a little happy again, and I love him so much still—and the baby, for his sake." The holy office of maternity had already commenced to do its blessed work. The mere fact of being a mother made me ashamed to neglect the duties of a child.

Then the effort of speaking seemed to bring the reality of the Great Unseen Presence home to my soul, and I clasped my hands above my infant reverently. "Oh! God, make me good, for baby's sake," I said, "and that we may go to Hugh

together. I am very much obliged to You for having kept me safely during this dreadful illness, and I *would* like to be good and serve You, if I can. And I love Mary, because Hugh loved her so," I added, in a very low whisper, half afraid that I was saying something treasonable, and that if the nurse overheard me she might whip the baby away, lest it should be polluted; but still hoping that God might be pleased to hear it, and that my beloved Hugh might, in some roundabout manner, come to hear it too. And the allusion set me thinking that I would rather call my little girl by the Divine Mother's name than by any other.

"I will have her baptized 'Mary,'" I thought to myself, with a sudden glow of pleasure at the idea that Hugh would have chosen that name for her, and that there was something I still could do that would have pleased my husband had he been there,

“and I will call her May for short; and I will teach her to love the May for his sake—my own dear boy!”

I was quite fixed in this resolve, and not all Aunt Tessie’s insinuations that Sir Thomas and Lady Power might consider themselves aggrieved if they were not allowed to choose my baby’s name could make me alter it.

“I know that Hugh would have chosen ‘Mary,’” I said resolutely, “and I won’t have her christened anything else. And Mr. Dean shall christen her at Christ Church, as soon as ever I am well enough to go out; and then they may say what they like, but they won’t be able to alter it.”

But a few days afterwards my ideas on this subject received somewhat of a check from a letter written to me by my father-in-law, in which, after having congratulated me on the birth of my baby, and expressed

the pleasure of the entire household on the reception of the news, he went on to say :

“ I did not consider it necessary, my dear Katharine, to tell you before what it now becomes right that you should hear. The life of a little infant is so uncertain a thing, that I thought it better to wait and see whether your child was likely to live before I informed you that the estates and income, which would have been our dear Hugh's, being strictly entailed in the direct line, will devolve at my death upon his daughter. The little girl is, in fact, my heiress, and it is, of course, the wish of Lady Power and myself that she should be brought up in a manner consistent with her future position. We were disappointed that you would not consent to her being born at Gentian's Cross ; but, of course, you will not think of having her christened until you come to us. If you have a Catholic priest in Guildford, you might have her baptised before cross-

ing; but leave the less simple part of the ceremony to be accomplished in our own church. We do not wish to bias you with respect to a name for the child; but Lady Power is called 'Georgina,' and our dear Hugh's second name was given to him after his mother."

The receipt of this letter was a shock to me. To hear that my baby was a great heiress, and, if she lived, would be a very rich woman, was almost a matter of indifference. At present, she was nothing but my little tender baby, and we had everything we required, and the future was a long, long way off to both of us; and I had hardly more capability of looking forward than she had. But to learn that I was expected to have her baptized a Roman Catholic was quite a different thing.

I had never dreamt it would be required—it took me completely by surprise. It was not that I had any objection to the



religion—why should I have, who had no religion for myself? If Hugh had lived, it would have come quite natural to see him take his child to his own Church, and have her baptized by one of his own priests. I should not have wished it to be otherwise.

But Hugh was dead, and I and my baby were left alone; and I felt as though she would not be so much my own child if she were brought up a Catholic, whilst I remained a Protestant. All the Powers were Catholics, and my baby would be one of them, and I should be shut out in the cold alone.

I could not bear the thought. I cried over it for a whole day, and made myself ill. Aunt Tessie did not entirely sympathise with my concern. She loved to have a dig at the Roman Catholics whenever she could. She called them idolatrous, and superstitious, and priest-ridden, after the good old Protestant fashion, whenever

she had an opportunity ; but, in this instance, I think the glitter of the gold dazzled her unworldly eyes a little, and she dilated more on the extraordinary indifference I displayed towards my child's prospects than on my dismay at finding she was to profess a different religion from myself.

"It's a most wonderful opening for her, Katharine," she said, "and I'm surprised you don't see it. I shouldn't wonder if the Powers offer to take her right off your hands as soon as she's done teething."

"*Take her off my hands!*" I echoed in dismay; "take my baby away from me! They shall kill me first! But they can't; Aunt Tessie, can they? It's not law."

"Dear me, Katharine, you need not be so vehement. But though, of course, it's a great pity the little girl should be reared in the errors of Popery, and taught to worship graven images, instead of the true God—"

"Don't talk such nonsense!" I cried

irreverently. "You don't know what you're saying, Aunt Tessie. Dear Hugh never did any such thing—I am sure of that."

"Well, my dear, if he didn't, depend on it he *ought* to have done so. However, as I was saying, though it's very sad, yet as it is, you see—and the estate being entailed and all—I suppose it becomes quite a necessity that the child should be brought up in the religion of her father's family."

"I wouldn't have minded it if Hugh had lived," I said despondently.

"What difference can that make, Katharine?"

"I don't know—but it does. Hugh was a Catholic; but he loved me, and was everything that was best and dearest. As for these other people, I don't care for them, nor they for me, and I can't say why—only it makes me miserable."

"This is childish," replied Aunt Tessie; and I daresay it was; but the idea became

fixed in my mind, and I was not the less unhappy about it.

I had sufficient sense to see that, under the circumstances, it was wisest and best my baby should be reared in her father's faith; and the fact that it had been her father's faith greatly reconciled me to the notion; but I was not so easily persuaded to adopt Sir Thomas's hint about her name. I disliked the name of "Georgina." I could not fancy the child by that appellation. I was most unfavourably predisposed towards my mother-in-law, and I determined that my baby should not be called after her. Yet I felt terribly afraid of the whole family, and could not tell what forces might not be brought to bear upon me if I carried her over to Ireland before she had been christened.

So as soon as ever I was well enough to get about again, and had dismissed the nurse, and freed myself from the momentarily guar-

dianship of that most vigilant of gaolers, I slipped out of the cottage one morning, with my child in my arms, and carried her into the little Catholic chapel where dear Hugh used to say his prayers, and had her made a Christian before any one knew anything about the matter.

"I have just had baby baptized," I said boldly, as I bore her back into Aunt Tessie's parlour, and sank down on the sofa, exhausted with my heavy burden.

"Baptized! Good gracious me, Katharine, what an extraordinary girl you are! Why couldn't you have told me of your intention? And without sponsors, too! How could it be done?"

"Oh, I explained to the priest that we were going to take a journey; and she's only baptized, you know. She can be properly finished off when she gets to Gentian's Cross, and then the Powers may find sponsors for her if they will. But

they can't alter her name," I added, with a chuckle.

"What may her name be, then?"

"Hugh Mary."

"Katharine, you must be mad! What! call a girl by a man's name? It appears positively indelicate to me."

"I don't care if it's delicate or indelicate," I rejoined shortly. "That's her name, and she'll have to stick to it. I wasn't going to have my child called by any of their absurd Georginas or Juliettas. She's the only thing left me of Hugh, and I choose she shall bear his name."

"But you *can't* call her *Hugh*."

"I shall call her anything I choose; but I mean to call her 'May'. And I am sure Hugh would have liked the name, and so do I—and there's an end of it, isn't there, my darling?" I concluded, addressing the baby.

"Well, Katharine, you always were

headstrong and incomprehensible to me; but this is the wildest thing, I think, you ever did. *Miss Hugh Power!* I never heard of such an idea! Every one will ask what it means. I only hope it may not induce Sir Thomas and Lady Power to resign their good intentions on the little girl's behalf."

"How can they if the estates are entailed?" I demanded. I was growing very wise with regard to the things of this world.

"Oh! but there is so much more they can do, if they choose—her education and bringing up, and so forth. But to have a young lady called 'Hugh' running about the place! It will make things most disagreeable, I should think, for every one concerned."

"But she is to be called 'May,' I tell you."

"It is not much better than the other. They are both fantastic, and out of the

common way. But you never do anything like other people, Katharine. You never did, and I suppose you never will. Well, we must hope for the best. There are two letters for you from Dublin on the drawing-room table. Shall I ring for Jane to take the baby whilst you read them?"

"No; baby and I will go and read them together," I replied as I left the room, dragging my burden with me. At that time I could hardly bear to let the child out of my arms. I was wasting all my newly acquired strength with the unusual exertions I was making. But I had a silly, though tantalising, fear that she would never be quite so much my own child if I gave up the care or trouble of her to any other person.



## CHAPTER XI.

### GOOD-BYE TO GUILDFORD.

THE letters were from Sir Thomas and Lady Power, both urgently pressing me to go and stay at Gentian's Cross as soon as ever I was strong enough to undertake the journey.

"You must take pity on our great anxiety to become acquainted as soon as possible with you and the dear little stranger," wrote Lady Power; "and do your utmost to be with us by next month. The climate here is more genial than in England, and likely to agree better with the baby, and every one acknowledges that our part of the country is most healthy. All my family

were born and brought up here, and you know what a specimen of vigorous manhood our beloved Hugh was. Indeed, my dear Katharine, I have become most anxious to see one who was so dear to him as yourself, and to give you the welcome due to a daughter of our house. I am sure you will try to fall in with the wishes of Sir Thomas and myself in coming to Gentian's Cross as soon as possible."

The rest of the letter was written much in the same strain; but I was not to be taken in by it. I knew that Lady Power had been very proud of her only son. I had little doubt that she felt the blow of his early death keenly; but if she had been so devoted to him and his memory, why had she left me for so many weary months without a word of consolation or sympathy?

Aunt Tessie accounted for it on the score of her pride and maternal affection having

been so deeply wounded by Hugh's runaway marriage with me. That she had expected and intended great things for him, and that his conduct had upset all her plans. That might have been true, and I acknowledged that she had reason to be angry; but when the poor boy died, so suddenly and sadly, leaving a widow of fifteen on the world alone, surely his early death might have been accounted by his own mother to have expiated his boyish folly. If she had loved him so much, would not her heart have melted then at the thought of *my* sorrow and *my* loss? Yet not a line had she ever written to me, nor sent me a message even, until she heard that I was likely to become a mother, and knew that if my infant lived it would be heir apparent to her own and her husband's wealth. When she heard the Almighty was about to send me consolation, my Lady Power thought it time she should offer it

likewise. Was it done for *my* sake? I felt it was not. I felt it was but a carrying-on of the pride she had cherished for her son, and that had I continued childless, she would never have troubled her head about me. I might have killed myself with grief for the boy she professed to adore, in my lonely seclusion, and Lady Power would only have considered it a good thing I was out of the way, and not likely to trouble them again. But as the mother of their grandchild and heiress, I had become a different creature. In me was partly wrapped up the well-being of the baby; for her sake I must be treated to consideration and flattery. I was young, but I could see through that! What feeling did it awaken in my breast? Pride, too—though of a different nature. Yes! they might say what they liked, and think what they liked—these Powers!—but *I* was the mother of *my own child*, and they could not get at her except through flattery of me.

I did not shrink from going to Dublin. On the contrary, I wished to go there, and prove to them that though I *was* only sixteen, I was old enough to comport myself as became the girl whom Hugh had loved, and the mother of the heiress of Gentian's Cross.

Poor fool ! A mouse might as well have pricked up its ears, and curled its tail, and marched boldly into a lion's den, determined to show what a brave animal it was, and how well it could hold its own. The mouse might possess all the necessary spirit to make the attempt ; but what would be the use of its spirit when once inside the lion's jaws ?

So, innocently, but defiantly, did I cause my boxes to be packed up, and, with Jane as my nurse, and the baby clasped closely in my arms, left the safe precincts of Ivy Cottage to cross the Irish Channel for Gentian's Cross.

I don't think Aunt Tessie was altogether

sorry to part with us. Her behaviour towards me had been much modified since I had returned to her house a widow ; and the addition I had made to her modest income must have been felt when I departed again. Still I had considerably upset her little *ménage*, and I don't think she had ever got used, nor do I think she ever would have got used, to the noise and confusion consequent on the baby's appearance.

She was the very moral and essence of a stereotyped old maid. It seems strange to me now that I should have left Guildford without any idea of, or allusion to, revisiting it. Aunt Tessie expressed a conventional wish, on saying good-bye, that we should soon meet again, and I echoed it; but I had formed no plans for the future, and I carried all my possessions with me. My whole mind was wrapped up in my child, and I think if I had any notion for the future, it was that I should take a tiny cottage some-

where, and live with Jane and my baby, and attend on the latter night and day, until she had grown up into a beautiful woman, who would be like my shadow, and go with me everywhere. Any way, that cottage was not to be at Guildford; for I climbed up to the wood the day before I left it, to say good-bye to the place where my dear dead boy had sat and talked to me of love and marriage, and laid his baby down on the same spot, under the shade of the hawthorn, now all white again with blossom, and called on him there to come back to us, if only for one moment, to say that he would be with us wherever we might go. But the only answer that came to me was the waving of the hawthorn tree by a sudden breeze that sent the frail May flowers showering down upon my baby's face, and caused her to smile—a smile that was too much like his not to make me cry. And then I had pulled a bunch of blossoms for a keepsake of the place, and, turning

homewards with my child, felt as though I had been saying farewell again to my Hugh's grave. I think I was sorry to go even after that. I crept into the little Catholic chapel on the last morning of my stay there, and timidly knelt down in the seat the priest had told me Hugh had always occupied, and bent my head upon my hands. The building was quite empty, but lamps were burning here and there, and the heavy smell of incense still lingered about it. I felt nervous and solemn, as if Hugh's spirit were kneeling beside me, or some of the saints of whom he used to talk so often were watching what I did.

Still it was a church, and the scene of my child's baptism; and though I felt hot and uncomfortable lest some one should come in and recognise me, I knelt on, praying to God not to let Hugh forget me, and feeling as though Hugh's God must hear me there better than in any other place. When I had



knelt for about half an hour I got up, and silently approached the door. A stoup of holy water confronted me. I knew its use, and, dipping my finger in it, wetted my forehead. As I did so I felt an increase of comfort. It seemed as if the action had drawn me nearer to Hugh, and I left the chapel regretfully, wishing I had gone there oftener whilst I had had the opportunity.

I pass over the horrors of the journey—a long, unintermitting journey, by cab, and rail, and steamer, is at all times a duty rather than pleasure; and when it is performed with the accompaniment of a baby of three months old, it becomes something too terrible even to look back upon.

Jane and I went from Guildford to London, from London to Holyhead, from Holyhead to Kingstown, and from Kingstown to Dublin, *with the baby!* and what *she* thought of the baby by the time we arrived at the Westland Row Station I know not, and most

likely she would have been afraid to say ; but if I had not been her mother, and she, my sole possession in the world, the only thing left to remind me of my beloved Hugh, I verily believe I should have thrown her out of window or chucked her overboard. Did ever baby whine as that baby whined, or keep so horribly wide awake and lively, or so unmistakably over-eat itself, or insist on being danced at the carriage-windows when our arms ached with fatigue, or walked up and down the vessel when we were so sick we could hardly stand ?

Well, all things have an end, and we reached Dublin at last—tired out and longing for rest, but safe and together ; and the first sight that greeted my astonished eyes was the figure of Sir Thomas Power waiting for us on the platform—Sir Thomas, whom I had imagined to be ten miles away at Gentian's Cross. This *was* a surprise, but more was to follow.

"Never mind the luggage, my dear," he said, as he handed me on to the platform. "My servants are here to see after that. I have a carriage in attendance, and you must come on at once to the Shelburne Hotel. Lady Power could not deny herself the pleasure of being the first to welcome you to Ireland, and she is waiting there for you."

And so, without time for speculation or remonstrance, just as I was—pale, travel-stained, and disordered—Sir Thomas Power pushed my baby, my nurse, and myself into one of the hotel vehicles, and carried us straight off into the presence of my august mother-in-law.

## CHAPTER XII.

### MY CHILD'S GRANDMOTHER.

I SUPPOSE, if I had had more time to think about it, I should have become terribly alarmed at the immediate prospect of meeting my mother-in-law. As it was, however, the baby, greatly objecting to the change in her mode of travelling, lamented so piteously all the way between the station and the hotel that my attention was completely taken up with her. For the last three months I had lived so entirely in and for this child, that I had developed into something not much better than a head nurse, and had no eyes nor ears for anybody or anything except her exacting little self and multifarious wants.

But the mere possession of her had so puffed me up with pride and self-consciousness that I had not the least idea that I made both myself and my baby ridiculous in the sight of others by my assumption of importance. I would not resign her to the care of Jane, even though Sir Thomas held out his arm to conduct me up the broad staircase of the Shelburne Hotel, but carried her pompously into Lady Power's sitting-room myself, her long robes and cloak almost sweeping the ground as I moved along, and threatening to upset me and my dignity together.

As we entered, a lady, whom I concluded to be my mother-in-law, rose hastily from her seat near one of the windows and advanced to receive us.

I had hardly time to lift my eyes to hers when, exclaiming hastily, "How do you do? Is this the baby?" she seized the child from my arms and carried it to the farther end of the room. I uttered a note of dismay, but

neither Lady Power nor Sir Thomas seemed to hear it. They were bending together over the infant—she, seated in a low chair, and he leaning over the back—both peering curiously into the little unformed features of their grand-daughter. But my baby was three months old—she was beginning to recognise people—and the strange faces gazing into hers soon frightened her. She puckered up her button mouth and began to cry. At that sound I darted forward.

“Please give her to me. She does not like strangers. She will not be quiet unless I take her,” I said imploringly.

But Lady Power held her close.

“Oh, no, my dear! you just sit down and rest yourself. She is not going to cry, bless her! Sir Thomas, be good enough to touch the bell for Doran to take Mrs. Power's things and tell them to serve up breakfast.”

Still the baby whimpered, and I trembled with indignation, longing, yet not daring to

make a second attempt to wrest it from my mother-in-law's arms. Doran was a long, thin, prim-looking lady's-maid who had been in the Power family, I found out afterwards, before my Hugh was born.

"Here is the baby, Doran," exclaimed her mistress briskly, as soon as she appeared. "A fine child, isn't she? The regular Power eyes and brow!"

"She's as fine a child as I ever see, my lady," replied Doran, without noticing my presence, "and the very moral of poor Master Hugh."

Lady Power's face clouded over for a moment.

"Very like him!" she said, softly, as she bent down and kissed the baby. She looked more womanly then than she had done before. For, during this little episode, I had had an opportunity of observing her general appearance, and what I saw of it I did not fancy. She was tall and handsome, with

rather a florid complexion, small features, dark eyes, and a profusion of grey hair ; but the expression of her mouth was hard and cold, and her eyebrows were too strongly marked for those of a woman.

I might have felt indignant at Lady Power passing me over with so little notice, but that circumstance did not affect me. I was only longing to get back my baby safely into my arms, half angry that she should have been taken from me so unceremoniously, and half frightened lest between her grandmother and her grandmother's maid she should come to harm. For what (thought I in my ignorant conceit) should old women know about the handling of babies.

"This is Mrs. Power, Doran. Show her into the bedroom, please, to take off her things ; and for the young woman—Is this your personal attendant, my dear ?" continued Lady Power, intimating poor Jane with a wave of her jewelled fingers.



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"She is baby's nurse," I commenced—

"*The nurse!* I should think she was much too young and inexperienced for such a responsible office. However, it was quite necessary you should bring some one over with you, and we shall soon remedy the evil. Let the young person go too, Doran, and remain in your room till we start for Gentian's Cross."

"But I would rather take baby with me, please!" I said, looking anxiously towards my little May, who was making preparations for a grand howl.

"Oh, I'll take care of the baby! I can't let her go just yet. And she's as good as gold!" replied Lady Power, as she began to jog the child up and down on her knee.

I left the room regretfully. I would have given worlds to remain, but I felt I *must* go, and the sooner I had removed my things, the sooner I should return. I had just tossed my crape bonnet and mantle on the bed when a loud wail from the sitting-

room sent me flying back again. Lady Power was walking up and down the apartment with the child over her shoulder, slapping it violently on the back, whilst little May, her face crimson with excitement and the discomfort occasioned by the dragging of her heavy cloak, was roaring babyfully.

I rushed at her—I made a supreme effort to regain her—but it was no use: Lady Power *would not let go.*

“Now, my dear, you had much better go back to the bedroom, and trust her to me. She’ll be as good as possible if you’ll leave her alone.”

“But she is hungry, and she is cross. I want to take off her things, and make her comfortable,” I said despairingly.

“It’s only a little show of temper. All children are so at times. And she will never get used to us if you follow her about in this manner.”

“But it is so soon, and she is tired with

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the journey. Please let me have her, Lady Power," I went on imploringly.

But my mother-in-law only threw the child about more vigorously, and made sounds that were intended to be soothing. I sank down into a chair and began to cry.

"My dear Katharine! what is the matter?" inquired Sir Thomas anxiously.

"I want my baby," I said wearily, as I listened to her long-continued wails. "She will never be quiet till I take her again."

"My dear Lady Power, Katharine wants the child," he exclaimed to his wife. "Pray let her have it! She is overtired and excited;" he continued, in a lower tone, "you really should pay her a little more attention than you do."

Lady Power turned and regarded me for a moment with contemptuous astonishment, then placed the squalling infant in my arms. I buried my face in that of my child. She was quiet directly, although

I wetted it with my tears—tears of disappointment at the reception I had met with, though, Heaven knows, I had never expected much.

“How very extraordinary!” ejaculated my mother-in-law. “Does fatigue always affect you in this manner? For I cannot believe it has anything to do with my nursing my grand-daughter—my own son’s child! It would have been most strange if I had *not* been pleased to see her and to nurse her.”

“Oh, no!” I faltered; “it is not that, indeed! At least—it is very foolish of me, I know, but—Hugh—all I have left—very tired from travelling”—fell in broken sentences from my half-hidden lips.

Lady Power seemed to take the allusion to her son as a species of affront, as though I would have blamed her for not mourning him as much as I did.

“Of course we all know you have

experienced a terrible loss," she answered coldly; "a *terrible* loss. No one has better reason to know it than ourselves; and you will not find, I fancy, that our beloved Hugh is either forgotten or ungrieved for at Gentian's Cross. Still, I must say, that under the circumstances, and considering all things, I should have imagined you would have been pleased, rather than otherwise, to see the welcome bestowed by his mother on your child."

"I am glad," I said timidly; "indeed I am not ungrateful, but I cannot bear to hear her cry, and"—I did not finish my sentence, but I might have done so by saying that I could not bear to see her monopolised by her grandmother, and that the sight struck to my heart like a deadly warning of what my future was to be—a constant striving to make my child distinguish between her father's family and me—to make her remember that, however near and

dear they might be to her, mine was a claim that no other person on earth could share or disannul.

"That is so very childish a remark, I hardly expected to hear it from you." returned my mother-in-law, in allusion to my last speech. "Children must cry sometimes, and be intrusted to the care of others, or they become a nuisance. What will you do with her during our breakfast? You can hardly keep her in your arms at the table!"

"I will give her to Jane," I said, in a subdued voice, as I rose to my feet; "she knows Jane quite well!"

"I will take her for you, Mrs. Power," exclaimed Doran, who had followed me into the room.

But I was not to be put down by Doran. I insisted upon carrying the infant into the bedroom myself; and when I returned, I knew by the way in which Lady Power

was whispering to her maid, and the suddenness with which they separated on my reappearance, that they had been discussing my conduct together, and that not favourably.

The meal that followed was a most uncomfortable one. I felt so wretched that I could not eat, and my mother-in-law's manner continued to be so stiff and cold that it did not encourage me to shake off the feeling. Sir Thomas tried to promote our sociability by talking to me of his daughters and Gentian's Cross, but in my ignorance of the subjects it was difficult for me to do more than listen, and the conversation visibly flagged.

After breakfast, however, I found we were not to go on to Gentian's Cross until the afternoon. There was the baby therefore to be washed and attended to, and in the pleasure derivable from assisting me in these operations, Lady Power recovered her good temper.

I always bathed and dressed the child myself, and was very proud of my dexterity and skill. I dare say I did not do either on any orthodox plan, but the baby approved of both, and hitherto no one had ventured to find fault with my method.

Yet on that morning Lady Power sat by and made me so nervous by the running commentary she kept up on my actions, that I nearly dropped my child into the bath, and put on all her things hind-foremost. It even ended in my making her cry—a sin which had never been laid at my door before.

“There, my dear! I thought how it would be,” exclaimed Lady Power. “No one who knows anything about an infant would put it right into water at that tender age. No wonder the poor little thing doesn’t like it. You should have washed her head first, and then carefully dried it;



but I will show you how to do it properly to-morrow. You would have had this poor child with a dreadful cold if you had pursued this plan much longer."

"But I have always washed her this way," I answered deprecatingly, "and she has never been ill yet."

"That is no reason she should not be; besides, you have had no one to instruct you. It takes many years of experience to comprehend the best means of treating young children. You will find the nurse I have provided for our grandchild everything you can desire in that respect."

"The nurse!" I faltered.

"Yes, my dear! of course. You did not suppose we should have sent for our dear Hugh's little girl over to Gentian's Cross without having everything properly provided for her reception. This nurse is a treasure! She was with my daughter Juliet for four years. You can trust this

little one to her with the utmost confidence."

"But Jane is baby's nurse, Lady Power. She has had the care of her ever since her birth."

"That was all very well at first, my dear, but the responsibility of looking after her will increase daily. This young woman also," continued Lady Power, looking at Jane, "is, I presume, a Protestant."

"Yes, she is ! Like I am," I replied, I am afraid, rather defiantly.

"Exactly," resumed my mother-in-law. "Well, the one is a misfortune we cannot remedy, but the other it is our duty to correct. And this young person's religion totally unfits her, in my opinion, to be my grandchild's personal attendant."

"Totally, my lady," echoed Doran.

How I hated Doran, with her light eyes, freckled complexion, and sandy hair. How I resented her joining in the conversation

her mistress was holding with myself, and siding, as it were, against me. I bent over my baby with a face crimson from excitement. Jane's was as red as my own, but she dared not speak. There was only one thing that prevented my doing so, though, and that was the thought that it was Hugh's mother that sat opposite to me. I was very ungrateful, too (so I told myself the first time I had leisure to think of it), to resent her solicitude on my child's behalf. After all, it could only be meant for kindness. And yet I did not feel it so, but already wished I had never left the quiet seclusion of Guildford, where, at least, no one had presumed to interfere with my management of my own child.

When she had fallen off into her morning sleep, and I had placed her, rosy and warm, upon the bed, and left Jane watching by her side, I followed Lady Power again into the sitting-room.

"You have dipped your cuff into the water," she observed, as we seated ourselves near the window.

I drew my handkerchief across the deep crape trimming of my dress. The action somehow reminded me to look at hers. To my surprise, I noticed for the first time that she did not wear black. It was true that my darling had been dead for twelve months, and that, strictly speaking, perhaps his mother had a right to assume a grey silk dress. Still, I thought she had loved him so much, and mourned him so deeply; and where that is the case it becomes almost as painful to leave off our black clothes as to assume them. It is a sort of consolation to let the world read how miserable and forlorn we feel. We are jealous of its daring to imagine that we can cease to grieve, or recommence to take pleasure in the vanities and follies of this earth. I bit my lips and pressed my hand

tightly over my crape cuff, as the idea passed through my mind. I felt as if I were pressing Hugh's dear hand, and assuring him with all the strength of my girlish heart, which had loved him as deeply as it was capable of loving, that *whoever* forgot, I still remembered.

Lady Power again appeared to interpret the expression of my face, and, as in the former case, to resent it.

"I see you still keep your first mourning," she said. "I suppose you have had so few opportunities of wearing it at Guildford that it is almost as good as new."

"I have not worn it much," I answered; "but if I had worn it quite out, I should have had my new dresses made just in the same way. I can't forget. It seems like yesterday to me."

"No one *forgets*, if you are alluding to my dear son," replied Lady Power hastily; "but it is not necessary to remain always in mourning to convince people of the fact.

There is an etiquette in all such matters that I like to see attended to—and it is equally bad taste to make ourselves conspicuous by disregarding it in one way as in the other.”

“But I *ought* to wear mourning for him longer than anybody else,” I remarked, with a view to conciliating her ruffled temperament.

“Do you think so? I should imagine a mother’s claim to be as strong as that of any one. *You* knew my poor boy, at the most, for a year. *I* brought him up from the moment he entered the world.”

“But I was his wife—he loved me best of all,” I replied, with trembling eagerness.

“Perhaps so! I have no wish to dispute it. But at the same time, my dear Katharine, I have no desire to discuss the subject, which is naturally a very painful one to me. There are periods in all men’s lives when they appear to be blinded to their best interests, and Sir Thomas and I both feel that if

our beloved son did for a while forget what was due to his parents and family, his untimely death forbids that we should continue to resent his conduct. Therefore I prefer never alluding to it."

"But he never forgot," I said, sobbing, for her chilly manner had made me break down entirely. "To the last he spoke of you, and wished you would write to and—"

"My dear Katharine, I have already said I prefer not speaking of the past. It cannot be undone, and the only thing we have to deal with now is the present. Had my son not left this child behind him to take his place with respect to that part of the property that is entailed, we should have considered it our duty to forget as soon as possible that we had ever possessed or lost him. As it is, however, Providence has seen fit to send us a remembrance of him; and as we did our duty by Hugh, so I trust we shall do it by his daughter. But there

is no need we should revive unpleasant recollections more than is strictly necessary. Suppose we talk of something else."

But I whimpered and was silent. To have turned the subject then would have seemed nothing less than rank ingratitude to me—ingratitude towards my dear dead lover, whose memory I promised myself every day to cherish to my life's end—and blasphemy against the tender tie that had connected us, and called out against oblivion. So I cried, and said nothing.

"The little girl has only been half baptized as yet, I believe," continued Lady Power, in a shriller, quicker tone, intended to be cheerful. "I suppose you intend to call her 'Georgina,' as Sir Thomas desires?"

"She was fully baptized, and she is called 'Hugh Mary,' and the priest said no one could ever take those names away from her," I answered, with a sort of triumph.

Lady Power pursed up her mouth to conceal her annoyance.



"*Indeed!* Well, I suppose it could hardly be *our* part to find any fault with your selection, but I never heard of a young lady being called by a gentleman's name in my life before."

"I don't care if it is a gentleman's name or a lady's. I know it was my poor darling's name; and that baby belongs to him and to me, and to no one else; and I would have her called just what I liked, and what I am sure *he* would like, too, if he could speak and tell me."

"Well, never mind; it will be quite allowable to add any names we choose when the child is received with all the ceremonies of the Church," said my mother-in-law, with a coolness that aggravated me.

"But I don't wish her to have any other name," I cried determinately.

"My dear Katharine, what you wish, or even I or Sir. Thomas might wish, has nothing to do with the matter. We look

upon this infant, not so much as our grand-child, as our heiress. If she lives, she will become the most powerful member of the family. It is not only becoming then, but almost necessary, she should bear some of the family names. We never supposed you would have her otherwise than conditionally baptized, for which purpose the name of Mary was very appropriate. I regret you should have acted so far on your own responsibility as to give her any other name, unless it had been the one Sir Thomas suggested to you. However, as I said before, it can be added; and as the Earl and Countess of Claretown have kindly consented to stand sponsors to her, I think her ladyship's name of Frances should certainly be included."

"My baby's sponsors! But I don't know them."

"You will have the honour of being introduced, of course, though you must be aware that their consent is due to their

intimacy with our family. The Powers are one of the oldest Catholic families in Ireland, and connected with most of its aristocracy; Lady Claretown herself being a distant cousin of Sir Thomas, and naturally anxious to oblige us in a case of this kind. Her friendship may prove of the greatest benefit to the little girl in after years."

"Hugh Mary Georgina Frances!" I murmured to myself despondently. "What an awful name!"

"I see nothing 'awful' in it at all," rejoined Lady Power tartly, "unless you allude to the part for which you are responsible. She must certainly be called Georgina! I am sure Sir Thomas will wish it to be so."

"I call her 'May,'" I said boldly, "and I always mean to call her so—in remembrance of something Hugh once said to me."

"Well, my dear, you will of course follow your own inclination in the matter, and we

can follow ours. There is no need we should have any dispute about a name : and indeed I consider all open disagreements on such trivial subjects exceedingly unladylike and unbecoming. How long does the little girl usually sleep in the morning ? ”

“ I let her sleep as long as ever she chooses. Sometimes she doesn't wake till after luncheon.”

“ That is not right ! Children should have their regular hours for sleep as well as for meals. But Raikes will soon bring her into good habits. She has an excellent method with babies. By the bye, do you think it worth while to take the young woman you brought over with you to Gentian's Cross ? It is not more than an hour's drive from here, and the child will be very good with us.”

“ But where can I leave Jane ? What would she do ? ” I demanded in consternation.

“She might remain here, and return to England by the evening mail. Sir Thomas will see everything properly arranged for her comfort.”

“But I am not going to part with Jane! I couldn’t—she is so fond of baby, and she is one of my best friends! She was so kind to Hugh and me.” I was about to continue when I suddenly remembered that my mother-in-law might not view the kindness with which poor Jane had helped her son to an elopement in the same light that I did.

“Do you intend to retain her as your own maid, then? She appears to me to be much too unformed for such position; and it will not be at all necessary you should keep one, as there are already two in attendance on my daughters and myself, and you can command the services of either at any time. Besides which, we are about as full now at Gentian’s Cross as we can be, without inconvenience. But you must do as you think best!”

I perceived that Lady Power did not wish me to keep my servant, but I resented parting with her strongly, and especially in so summary a manner. I felt as if I should be entirely alone and unprotected were she to quit me.

"I cannot part with Jane," I repeated timidly, half afraid of what opposition to Lady Power's proposal might bring forth "at all events until baby is older. And I like her to dress and undress me, and to—"

"Oh! very good," replied my mother-in-law, looking as if she thought it "very bad" the while. "There is no need to say anything more about it. Sir Thomas, will you be kind enough to order luncheon for us, and tell Doran we shall start for Gantian's Cross in an hour's time. Raikes begged we would not keep the baby out after sunset," she continued, turning to me; "and, like all good nurses, she is rather despotic. I should have brought her with me to receive

her little charge, but I thought there might be some such complication as has arisen with regard to your own attendant. The barouche will be full as it is. But we must not start a moment later than three o'clock."

I pressed my teeth upon my under lip and answered nothing. I told myself that all this fussy, pompous preparation was intended as a compliment to my infant and to me, but I could not accept it gratefully. On the contrary, as I listened, during luncheon, to Lady Power's description of the day nursery and the night nursery at Gentian's Cross and Raikes' excellent method, and Lord and Lady Claretown's amiable acquiescence to stand sponsors at the coming christening, my spirits sank lower and lower, and I felt at last as if my own child were slipping away from my feeble grasp without my having the power to retain her, and that she would be my own child no longer.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### MY CHILD'S NURSE.

THE drive from Dublin to Gention's Cross was perfectly lovely, and had I been in a better humour for admiring scenery I must have enjoyed it. But I had been separated from Jane (who was stuck up in the rumble beside the footman), and sat opposite Sir Thomas and that horrid Doran with her keen eyes and sandy hair; little May, moreover, had become cross and restless, and my mother-in-law drove me wild by wrenching her from my arms every second, and making her scream with rage and fright combined. The journey seemed as though it occupied five hours instead of one; but it was over at



last, and the carriage rolled through a magnificent park and pleasure-grounds until it reached the portico of the mansion which was to belong, some day, to the unconscious but horribly awake bundle I carried in my arms. As the hall-door was thrown open I saw a stout middle-aged woman, dressed in black silk with a white muslin cap and apron, and accompanied by a young girl, standing curtsying in the hall. I felt at once this was the dreaded Raikes who was to take my baby from me, and my suspicions were at once confirmed by Lady Power.

“ Ah, Mrs. Raikes ! I thought you would be waiting to receive us. Here is your little charge, safe and well. Will you give the infant to Mrs. Raikes, my dear ? She will soon relieve you of all trouble on her account.”

I did not know how to act. I was so encumbered with the weight of the child that I could not leave the carriage with her in

my arms. Some one must take her from me : Mrs. Raikes' hands were extended for the purpose. I submitted to the force of circumstances because I knew not how to contend against them, and gave my darling over to the stranger. That was the first step. It appeared to be a necessary—nay, more, a most advisable one—but I never could retrace it. It was but a trifle at the time, but, with that action commenced the forging of the chain which was to bind my child to her father's family, and widen the distance between her and myself. It baptized her a Power. It sealed her as the heiress of Gentian's Cross and Derry Lodge, and half-a-dozen other properties ; it deposed me to the level whence I had sprung ! I did not know it at the time, of course, but from the moment my child was received in the pompous arms of Mrs. Raikes—solemnly delivered over to that experienced female as a sacred charge to be nurtured for the future

glory of the Power family—I sank into a mere nothing by her side: only the girl who had brought Hugh's baby into the world—the medium through which it had pleased Providence to send an heiress to the estates—some one that had to be tolerated and made the best of, because she was the mother of the child, but entitled to no consideration or respect because the child was hers.

It may seem strange that a woman who had passed through the dignity of being a wife and a mother should have submitted to be thrust into so unimportant a position without, at least, making a remonstrance. To this objection I have but one reply to make. I was only sixteen years of age, and the truth did not dawn on me until much later. When it did, I had too much sense not to perceive how much open opposition might injure the prospects of my child, and too much love for her not to be willing to sacrifice my own inclination for

her benefit. But at the first home-coming I was sick with trepidation and uncertainty, and the impression that there was nothing left to me except the baby. As soon as I had reached the hall I attempted to take her back from Mrs. Raikes' arms.

"Dear me, madam! I could not think of allowing you to carry her. But if you would like to see the nurseries, and will please step this way, I shall be most happy to show them to you."

"Mrs. Power cannot go at present," interposed my mother-in-law, who had joined us. "She is coming with me to the library. You take the child to her room, Raikes, and we will pay you a visit presently. Come, my dear Katharine, I must introduce you to my daughters."

I kissed my baby hurriedly, and followed Sir Thomas and Lady Power through a lofty hall and up a wide staircase (which made me feel very small and mean) into a beautifully

furnished library. Three ladies, who rose on our approach, were seated in it. They were my sisters-in-law, Margaret, Blanche, and Norah Power, and they none of them looked very young to me, although the eldest could not have been at that time more than seven-and-twenty. But my husband, who had six sisters, three married and three single, was the youngest of the whole family, and had been made almost as much of for that circumstance as for being the heir. Sir Thomas embraced his daughters very affectionately, although he had only been absent a few hours; but their mother was above such a display of weakness.

“Allow me to introduce Mrs. Power to you, my dears,” she said curtly, and then I was left standing by myself to confront my sisters-in-law, who came up, one by one, in a manner which would have seemed shy if it had not been accompanied by so piercing a scrutiny, and shook hands with me feebly

and indifferently. No one of them was a *bit* like Hugh. I decided that in my own mind at once. But they were fine, handsome girls, with the dark hair and delicate complexions so indicative of their countrywomen. Margaret was the first to speak.

"But where is the baby?" she inquired—of her mother, not of me.

"Mrs. Raikes has taken it to the nursery, my dear. It has been sadly upset by the long journey, poor little thing!"

"Oh! I must go and see it!" she exclaimed, making for the door.

"And I"—"And I," echoed her sisters as they followed her.

I could not let them go alone—I was burning to exhibit my child, and I hurried after them.

"You had better remain here," said Lady Power; but I paid no attention to her suggestion.

"I must see baby!" I said, and joined the

Miss Powers just as they reached the staircase.

"Are you coming, too?" said Blanche in a tone of surprise.

"Oh, yes! I want to go to my baby. I cannot bear her to be with anybody else."

"I should have thought you would be rather glad to get rid of her for awhile! Babies are a terrible nuisance."

"Do you think so? Mine never is. She is scarcely ever out of my arms."

"Well, I know Juliet's are, and we have a regular benefit of them every summer; and I can remember poor Hugh—" But here she pulled herself up and hesitated. She was not quite sure how I might take the mention of her brother.

"Don't mind speaking of him to me," I said in a low voice. "I like to hear his name. I often talk of him to baby."

But at this assertion they only stared at one another and dropped the conversation. The

day and night nurseries were in a corridor on the second floor. Margaret Power knocked at the door before she ventured to open it.

"May we come in, Mrs. Raikes?" she said, as she stood on the threshold. "We want so much to see my brother's child."

Mrs. Raikes, who was evidently making preparations for a grand scrub of the baby, did not appear very much pleased at our interrupting her.

"Well, ladies, of course you can come in if you desire it, but I do wish you had waited till I had washed and dressed her. She's not fit to be seen as she is!"

"But she has had her bath already," I said quickly; "she cannot require another. I never bathe her except in the morning and evening."

Mrs. Raikes looked at me, not disrespectfully, but with an air of unmitigated authority—an authority which no one had ever presumed to call into question. She re-



minded me painfully at that moment of my whilom gaoler, the monthly nurse, only she looked more as if a duchess had consented to turn monthly nurse in order to bring up an heir apparent to the throne in the way that he should go. I positively quailed before her eye and her rustling black silk dress.

"It is quite necessary she should be washed and dressed again, madam," she replied. "She is rumpled and tumbled—not fit to be seen."

I flew to my child. She was lying half disrobed in a bassinette, profusely trimmed with white muslin, lace, and blue satin ribbons. The young rogue was as happy as could be; kicking and cooing to herself as she revelled in her dishabille, and tried to grab the bunches of bright ribbon that depended just above her nose. A fearful pang of jealousy stabbed my heart as I saw that already she was quite at home,

and the blue ribbons of her grand bassinette were distracting her attention from myself.

"Baby! Baby, darling! My little pet! My little love!" I said caressingly as I bent over and kissed her.

"Please not to raise her, madam," interposed Mrs. Raikes quickly. "She might take a cold with half her things off."

"Oh, let me see her!" and "Let me see her!" burst from my sisters-in-law as they crowded round the little cot and thrust me to one side. I listened to their rapturous remarks on her size, and features, and complexion, for some moments in pride; then, finding that they neither congratulated nor appealed to me in any way, I let my eyes wander over the apartment, and was astonished at the luxury it contained. Had it been prepared for the reception of a princess of the blood royal, it could not have been more sumptuously furnished.

And on the table lay the garments, all fresh and new from the baby-linen warehouse, which Mrs. Raikes had spread out to dress my darling in—a lace robe and cap, and silken shoes, and the finest white cashmere shawl to throw over all. I could not feel angry; on the contrary, I felt proud, and pleased, and grateful; but, at the same time, I felt sad—both sad and subdued.

“Do let us see you wash and dress her, Mrs. Raikes,” said Blanche Power presently in a coaxing voice. “She is such a little beauty; I want to see her naked.”

“Oh, no, Miss Blanche! I couldn’t think of such a thing! not to-day at all events. I never allow any one to be in the room when I am washing my babies. It is one of my strictest rules. So you must please to leave—both you and the other ladies—and when she’s had her afternoon sleep I’ll bring her down into the drawing-room for you to see.”

But at this I waked up. I could not be turned out of the nursery like anybody else; just as if I were not my own child's mother!

"I have washed baby ever since her birth, nurse," I said, in a tone which I intended to be determined; "and I should not like anybody to bathe her without me. She will not be good with you. She will cry dreadfully directly she finds she is alone."

"I never had a baby cry with me yet, madam," replied Mrs. Raikes, as she continued to make preparations for the bath, "and I have nursed in the highest of families. I have not the least fear but what the little lady will be quite good with me, and I never break through my rules for any one."

"But I am her mother!" I urged, thinking she could not possibly understand the importance of my position.

"Oh, I know that, madam! and you've reason to be proud of her; but I never would bathe my babies before a third person, and I never will! The Countess of Mulligan had quite a fight with me about it when I first entered her ladyship's family; and so had Lady Moore, but they was obliged to give in to me at last, because it was the only terms on which I would serve them!"

"Don't say anything more about it," whispered Margaret Power to me. "You'll put her out, and she's awful in one of her tempers."

"But I have *always* washed baby myself," I said piteously.

"What does that signify? She'll do it much better than you can. She's had the charge of no end of children, and knows how to doctor them and everything. We had much better go."

My heart was full, but I did not argue

the point any further. If I enraged Mrs. Raikes, what might she not do to revenge herself on my innocent baby when I was gone! So I only kissed little May, and prepared to quit the room.

"We're going now, Mrs. Raikes," said Miss Power, in a conciliatory tone. "Good-bye; you'll let us have baby downstairs as soon as she's dressed, won't you?"

"I shall take her down at the proper time, miss, you may be sure of that. And I'm very glad you *are* going, for the room seems to me in a regular muddle. We shall be more to-rights to-morrow."

"Come along, Katharine, and we'll show you your room," exclaimed Blanche, as she and her sisters drew me again into the corridor.

The apartment prepared for my reception was on the lower floor. A handsome room, but too large to be comfortable, to my fancy, for one solitary girl and her tiny baby.

"It is rather far from the nursery," I said, as we entered it. "Mrs. Raikes will have to wash and dress baby before she leaves my room in the mornings."

"How do you mean?"

"It would be a long way to carry her before she is dressed."

"Why, you're not going to have the child to sleep with you?"

"Oh, indeed I am! She has never slept out of my bed since she has been born!"

"Well, I don't think mamma expects it; and I fancy you will have to ask Raikes' leave. I hardly imagine she will like trotting up and down these staircases."

"But I *can't* have my baby taken from me like this!" I exclaimed in alarm. "We have never been separated. I cannot live without her. She is all I have got."

"Well, don't cry about it! I dare say it will come all right; only of course

mamma has her notions on these matters, and Raikes will not be interfered with."

"Why couldn't they have left her to Jane?" I said, sobbing. I was thoroughly exhausted with my long journey and the tumult in my mind.

"Who is Jane?"

"My servant. She has always taken such care of baby, and she got on so nicely at Guildford."

"Well, I suppose mamma thought a more experienced nurse advisable. We naturally set great store by the child, as poor Hugh was the only son, you see, and—"

"Oh, yes, I know all that," I said despondently.

"And, in consequence, she belongs more to the name and the estates, as it were, than to you or to us. I am sure you have too much good sense not to see that. But I dare say when mamma hears you want



the baby to sleep with you, she will coax Raikes into giving in."

But this supposition proved perfectly groundless. Lady Power strenuously resented the idea of taking the baby away from Mrs. Raikes' care at night; and as for Mrs. Raikes herself, she said she had never heard of such a thing—that she wouldn't give in on the subject, not even to the Countess of Mulligan nor Lady Moore—and that if the child was to be racketed about from one room to another after that fashion, she would rather not have the care of it at all. Whereupon my mother-in-law asserted that the baby would be ruined if Mrs. Raikes resigned her charge—that she had been chosen with Sir Thomas's perfect approbation—that she was paid fifty pounds a year—and it was only what was due to their eldest son's child, and the heiress to their estates, that the infant should be thoroughly well cared for, and

reared by a woman of the worth and experience of Mrs. Raikes.

And so I gave in. In a very few minutes it was decided that the baby was not to sleep any longer with me.

I resigned her with many tears, the last thing at night, to the care of her new nurse, and I cried myself to sleep afterwards on my lace-frilled but lonely pillow. I dare say it was very childish and very silly of me ; for there is no doubt that little May was tended like a queen, and that Mrs. Raikes was in every respect better fitted to look after her than Jane or myself. Still—though I was still her mother—all the *fun* of possessing her from that day seemed over. More—all the dignity and pride of ownership vanished with it too.

The temporary exaltation on which I piqued myself, and which had consoled me at Ivy Cottage for the insignificant position which, as a widow, I had assumed, was

gone again. No one seemed to look up to me or envy me at Gentian's Cross for being baby's mother. On the contrary, my child became the centre of observation and remark, and I was treated—like anybody else. Even on the rare occasions when Mrs. Raikes thought it necessary to appeal to anybody on the subject of the baby's drives, or walks, or dress, she did not appeal to me, but to Lady Power.

From the time I entered the house to the hour I left it, I had no more to do with my own child than Jane had—poor Jane!—who, before she had been there a month, was so uncomfortable that she gave me notice to leave. Mrs. Raikes used, certainly, to bring baby downstairs at stated periods, and I generally kept her in my arms all the time, devouring her with kisses; but when I visited the nursery, it was in the character of a guest, and I soon found that to give a hint or make a suggestion was to ruffle

Raikes' temper for the day. My child was always exquisitely dressed, and grew and throve remarkably well. She became a great pet, too, with her aunts; and Sir Thomas and Lady Power noticed her progress with satisfaction, and generally had her down to exhibit with much ceremony to their friends. But they never exhibited *me*. A passing "*This is Mrs. Power,*" or "*Allow me to introduce my daughter-in-law,*" was all the compliment they paid to baby's mother; and I crept about the big house in my black dress, looking as much like a schoolgirl as ever, and rather subjected to being snubbed by my sisters-in-law than not.

I do not say that they were actively unkind to me, for that would not be true; but they were indifferent, which is perhaps harder to bear, because more difficult to cope with. They had their own pleasures and pursuits, and they did not invite nor wish me to share in them. They expected me,

doubtless to carve out pleasures and pursuits for myself; but I had not the heart or energy to do so. Could I have had the range of all those beautiful grounds and gardens, and been allowed to roam about them with my dear baby in my arms, I should have been perfectly happy, and desired nothing more. But the etiquette of Gentian's Cross did not permit of roving about at lawless hours; and Lady Power was almost as shocked as Mrs. Raikes (not quite) at the idea of my taking upon myself the duties of a nursemaid. And although I used to manage to circumvent Raikes as she left the house to take baby for a walk, and insist upon accompanying her, it always happened somehow that little May was asleep, and must not be disturbed, or had just had her meal, and must not be excited—any excuse, in fact, to prevent my crumpling or otherwise mismanaging those splendid robes, and mantles, and hoods, of which, I verily believe, Mrs.

Raikes thought a great more than she did of the baby. It was lovely summer weather, and I should have liked to have been out of doors all day, tossing about my little one amongst the buttercups and daisies, and teaching her how to laugh and crow, and use those sturdy little limbs that already rebelled against the irksome confinement of long robes. But Mrs. Raikes would as soon have let me play ball with her sacred charge. She *did* let us have a romp together occasionally, when baby was undressed for the night, and I sometimes thought that even Mrs. Raikes pitied me for my youth, and loneliness, and widowhood; and it was such moments that kept my life in me, and made me able to bear up against the oppression of feeling that assailed me whenever I was in the drawing-room.

Can I explain myself? No one was unkind to me, but still less was anybody kind. Sir Thomas treated me much as if I were

one of the family ; but I never felt akin to any of them.

For me, there was no one in the wide world but baby and myself, and I grew to love baby more and more every day.

At last I began to hear great talk about the ceremony of the christening. Lord and Lady Claretown were expected the beginning of the week ; and Mrs. Delancey (the sister, Juliet, of whom my Hugh used to speak to me) was to arrive at the same time. Her name struck a chill to my heart whenever I heard it mentioned. I dreaded meeting her ; for it was at her house where he had gone in my behalf, and because of my disobedience, that my Hugh had met with his death. I always called him "*my Hugh,*" now, in my own thoughts, and to others. Lady Power had heard me use the term with a toss of the head ; but I didn't mind. He seemed so completely forgotten, so unmourned at Gentian's Cross, that I

took a secret delight in calling him mine before the world, lest it might class me in the category of those who disregarded his dear memory. There was a full-length oil-painting of him hung in the dining-room, and at first I had been quite unable to look at, or even sit opposite to it, it affected me so deeply. It had been taken but a couple of years before, and represented him standing by his horse, with one hand twisted in the animal's mane. There was a look of life about the picture—a joyous expression in the bright eye and speaking mouth, as if he were just about to step down and join the party assembled beneath him—just about to say, “Here I am, my darling Katie! Whatever made you think that I was dead?” And to the last it was agony to me to look at it. The first occasion on which I saw it (and the Powers had quite unprepared me for the shock) I thought I was going to faint with the emotion it called forth; but



I recovered myself, and steadily kept my eyes turned in another direction until the meal on which I was engaged was ended. But when the family had separated for the night, and gone into their respective rooms, I crept downstairs again with a flickering candle in my hand, and held the light up to the dear, familiar face, and gazed and gazed my fill. I thought I could be very calm and quiet; but, as I turned to go, the thought of leaving him, with that sweet, bright smile upon his face, alone in the darkness, as I had left him alone in the grave, struck on me like a sudden knell, and, dropping the candlestick I knew not where, I flung myself passionately into a seat and sobbed my heart out. And who should find me in that position but Sir Thomas Power, who happened to be passing in the hall. He did not say much as he conducted me back to my room; but I don't think he liked me the less for my temporary weakness.

The next time we dined in that room, however, a silk curtain shaded the picture of my darling, and I liked it better so. I often crept in alone and mounted on a chair to gaze at his dear, boyish face ; but I always drew the curtain close again, and was glad to think that he did not seem to smile on all the world whilst my heart was breaking.

But I had another portrait of him in my room that I did not hide away, and that I cherished above all my earthly possessions, except his baby. It was a photograph which he had had taken for me in Paris as a wedding present, and which had been uncompleted at the time of his death. Never shall I forget the feelings with which I received that likeness from the photographer's hands. My Hugh had been dead four months then (for the artist had not hurried himself), and the familiar look of his face was beginning (just a very little) to fade from my girlish memory. I opened

the box in which his gift arrived, pulled the packing paper off the morocco case, opened it, and received a shock still greater than the one which subsequently assailed me on seeing the oil-painting in the dining-hall at Gentian's Cross. For four months I had been thinking of my Hugh in the grave; for four months weeping over my last memory of him, lying cold, and grand, and beautiful, like sculptured marble, on his deathbed.

And here, he appeared before me alive and smiling, in a brown velvet coat, with one leg thrown carelessly over a chair, a cigar in his hand, a felt wideawake slouched over his face.

Oh! it is such moments as these that sprinkle grey hairs in our heads, and carve wrinkles on our brows. For days I had been unable to reopen that morocco case; then I had crept up to it again, and little by little nerved myself to bear the sight it contained, until it had become my greatest joy to gaze

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at it, and talk to it, and lay it under my pillow at night, that the first thing I might look at with each coming day might be my darling's face. And from that time I never knelt down to say my prayers (and since my baby's birth I had begun to pray) without that picture clasped in my raised hands. And though I am an old woman now, and many emotions have had possession of my breast since that period—emotions strong enough to obliterate my early sorrow, or make it stingless—yet I still retain the old custom, and when my prayers ascend to Heaven (as I humbly trust they do), they are breathed over the portrait of my dear boyish lover, whom I believe to be watching over me still, and pleading with the Eternal Father for our happy reunion in another world.

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